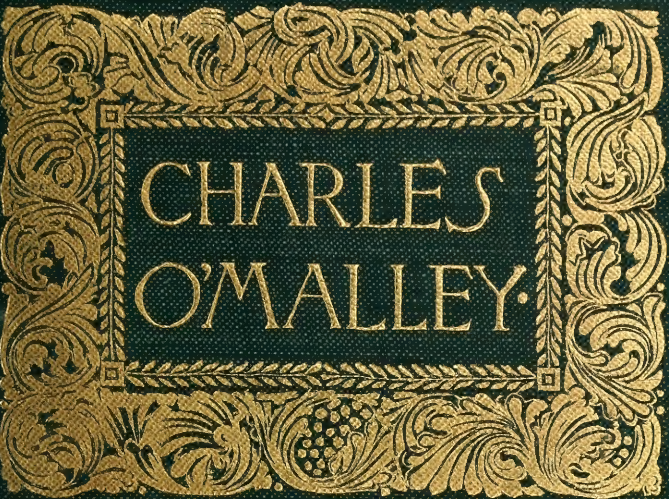

CHARLES O'MALLEY.

Exorcising a Spirit.

CHARLES O'MALLEY

The Irish Dragoon.

BY

CHARLES LEVER.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHIZ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CHARLES O'MALLEY,

THE IRISH DRAGOON.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOCTOR'S TALE.[1]

"It is now some fifteen years since — if it was n't for O'Shaughnessy's wrinkles, I could not believe it five — we were quartered in Loughrea. There were, besides our regiment, the Fiftieth and the Seventy-third, and a troop or two of horse artillery, and the whole town was literally a barrack, and as you may suppose, the pleasantest place imaginable. All the young ladies, and indeed all those that had got their brevet some years before, came flocking into the town, not knowing but the Devil might persuade a raw ensign or so to marry some of them.

"Such dinner parties, such routs and balls, never were heard of west of Athlone. The gayeties were incessant; and if good feeding, plenty of claret, short whist, country dances, and kissing could have done the thing, there would n't have been a bachelor with a red coat for six miles around.

---

[1] I cannot permit the reader to fall into the same blunder, with regard to the worthy "Maurice," as my friend Charles O'Malley has done. It is only fair to state that the doctor in the following tale was hoaxing the "dragoon." A braver and a better fellow than Quill never existed, equally beloved by his brother officers, as delighted in for his convivial talents. His favorite amusement was to invent some story or adventure in which, mixing up his own name with that of some friend or companion, the veracity of the whole was never questioned. Of this nature was the pedigree he devised in the last chapter of Vol. I. to impose upon O'Malley, who believed implicitly all he told him.

"You know the west, O'Mealey, so I need n't tell you what the Galway girls are like: fine, hearty, free-and-easy, talking, laughing devils, but as deep and 'cute as a Master in Chancery; ready for any fun or merriment, but always keeping a sly lookout for a proposal or a tender acknowledgment, which — what between the heat of a ball-room, whiskey negus, white satin shoes, and a quarrel with your guardian — it 's ten to one you fall into before you 're a week in the same town with them.

"As for the men, I don't admire them so much: pleasant and cheerful enough when they 're handicapping the coat off your back, and your new tilbury for a spavined pony and a cotton umbrella, but regular devils if you come to cross them the least in life; nothing but ten paces, three shots a-piece, to begin and end with something like Roger de Coverley, when every one has a pull at his neighbor. I 'm not saying they 're not agreeable, well-informed, and mild in their habits; but they lean overmuch to corduroys and coroners' inquests for one's taste farther south. However, they 're a fine people, take them all in all; and if they were not interfered with, and their national customs invaded with road-making, petty-sessions, grand-jury laws, and a stray commission now and then, they are capable of great things, and would astonish the world.

"But as I was saying, we were ordered to Loughrea after being fifteen months in detachments about Birr, Tullamore, Kilbeggan, and all that country; the change was indeed a delightful one, and we soon found ourselves the centre of the most marked and determined civilities. I told you they were wise people in the west; this was their calculation: the line — ours was the Roscommon militia — are here to-day, there to-morrow; they may be flirting in Tralee this week, and fighting on the Tagus the next; not that there was any fighting there in those times, but then there was always Nova Scotia and St. John's, and a hundred other places that a Galway young lady knew nothing about, except that people never came back from them. Now, what good, what use was there in falling in love with them? Mere transitory and passing pleasure that was. But as for us: there we were; if not in Kilkenny we were in Cork. Safe cut and come again; no getting away under pretence of foreign service; no excuse for not marrying by any cruel pictures of the colonies, where they make spatch-cocks of the officers' wives and scrape their infant families to death with a small tooth-comb. In a word, my dear O'Mealey, we were at a high premium; and even O'Shaughnessy, with his red head and the legs you see, had his admirers. There now, don't be angry, Dan; the men, at least, were mighty partial to you.

"Loughrea, if it was a pleasant, was a very expensive place. White gloves and car hire, — there was n't a chaise in the town, — short whist, too (God forgive me if I wrong them, but I wonder were they honest), cost money; and as our popularity rose, our purses fell; till at length, when the one was at the flood, the other was something very like low water.

"Now, the Roscommon was a beautiful corps; no petty jealousies, no little squabbling among the officers, no small spleen between the major's wife and the paymaster's sister, — all was amiable, kind, brotherly, and affectionate. To proceed, I need only mention one fine trait of them, — no man ever refused to indorse a brother officer's bill. To think of asking the amount or even the date would be taken personally; and thus we went on mutually aiding and assisting each other, — the colonel drawing on me, I on the major, the senior captain on the surgeon, and so on, a regular cross-fire of 'promises to pay,' all stamped and regular.

"Not but the system had its inconveniences; for sometimes an obstinate tailor or bootmaker would make a row for his money, and then we 'd be obliged to get up a little quarrel between the drawer and the acceptor of the bill; they could n't speak for some days, and a mutual friend to both would tell the creditor that the slightest imprudence on his part would lead to bloodshed; 'and the Lord help him! if there was a duel, he 'd be proved the whole cause of it.' This and twenty other plans were employed; and finally, the matter would be left to arbitration among our brother officers, and I need not say, they behaved like trumps. But notwithstanding all this, we were frequently hard pressed for cash; as the colonel said, 'It 's a mighty expensive corps.' Our dress was costly; not that it had much lace and gold on it, but that, what between falling on the road at night, shindies at mess, and other devilment, a coat lasted no time. Wine, too, was heavy on us; for though we often changed our wine merchant, and rarely paid him, there was an awful consumption at the mess!

"Now, what I have mentioned may prepare you for the fact that before we were eight weeks in garrison, Shaugh and myself, upon an accurate calculation of our conjoint finances, discovered that except some vague promises of discounting here and there through the town, and seven and fourpence in specie, we were innocent of any pecuniary treasures. This was embarrassing; we had both embarked in several small schemes of pleasurable amusement. had a couple of hunters each, a tandem, and a running account — I think it *galloped* — at every shop in the town.

"Let me pause for a moment here, O'Mealey, while I moralize a little in a strain I hope may benefit you. Have you ever considered — of course you have not, you 're too young and unreflecting — how beautifully every climate and every soil possesses some one antidote or another to its own noxious influences? The tropics have their succulent and juicy fruits, cooling and refreshing; the northern latitudes have their beasts with fur and warm skin to keep out the frost-bites; and so it is in Ireland. Nowhere on the face of the habitable globe does a man contract such habits of small debt, and nowhere, I 'll be sworn, can he so easily get out of any scrape concerning them. They have their tigers in the east, their antelopes in the south, their white bears in Norway, their buffaloes in America; but we have an animal in Ireland that beats them all hollow, — a country attorney!

"Now, let me introduce you to Mr. Matthew Donevan. Mat, as he was familiarly called by his numerous acquaintances, was a short, florid, rosy little gentleman of some four or five-and-forty, with a well-curled wig of the fairest imaginable auburn, the gentle wave of the front locks, which played in infantine loveliness upon his little bullet forehead, contrasting strongly enough with a cunning leer of his eye, and a certain *nisi prius* laugh that however it might please a client, rarely brought pleasurable feelings to his opponent in a cause.

"Mat was a character in his way; deep, double, and tricky in everything that concerned his profession, he affected the gay fellow, — liked a jolly dinner at Brown's Hotel, would go twenty miles to see a steeple-chase and a coursing match, bet with any one when the odds were strong in his favor, with an easy indifference about money that made him seem, when winning, rather the victim of good luck than anything else. As he kept a rather pleasant bachelor's house, and liked the military much, we soon became acquainted. Upon him, therefore, for reasons I can't explain, both our hopes reposed; and Shaugh and myself at once agreed that if Mat could not assist us in our distresses, the case was a bad one.

"A pretty little epistle was accordingly concocted, inviting the worthy attorney to a small dinner at five o'clock the next day, intimating that we were to be perfectly alone, and had a little business to discuss. True to the hour, Mat was there; and as if instantly guessing that ours was no regular party of pleasure, his look, dress, and manner were all in keeping with the occasion, — quiet, subdued, and searching.

"When the claret had been superseded by the whiskey, and the confidential hours were approaching, by an adroit allusion to some heavy wager then pending, we brought our finances upon the *tapis*. The thing was done beautifully, — an easy *adagio* movement, no violent transition; but hang me if old Mat did n't catch the matter at once.

"'Oh, it 's there ye are, Captain!' said he, with his peculiar grin. 'Two-and-sixpence in the pound, and no assets.'

"'The last is nearer the mark, my old boy,' said Shaugh, blurting out the whole truth at once. The wily attorney finished his tumbler slowly, as if giving himself time for reflection, and then, smacking his lips in a preparatory manner, took a quick survey of the room with his piercing green eye.

"'A very sweet mare of yours that little mouse-colored one is, with the dip in the back; and she has a trifling curb — may be it 's a spavin, indeed — in the near hind-leg. You gave five-and-twenty for her, now, I 'll be bound?'

"'Sixty guineas, as sure as my name 's Dan,' said Shaugh, not at all pleased at the value put upon his hackney; 'and as to spavin and curb, I 'll wager double the sum she has neither the slightest trace of one nor the other.'

"'I 'll not take the bet,' said Mat, dryly. 'Money 's scarce in these parts.'

"This hit silenced us both; and our friend continued, —

"'Then there 's the bay horse, — a great strapping, leggy beast he is for a tilbury; and the hunters, worth nothing here; they don't know this country. Them 's neat pistols; and the tilbury is not bad —'

"'Confound you!' said I, losing all patience; 'we did n't ask you here to appraise our movables. We want to raise the wind without that.'

"'I see, I perceive,' said Mat, taking a pinch of snuff very leisurely as he spoke, — 'I see. Well, that is difficult, very difficult just now. I 've mortgaged every acre of ground in the two counties near us, and a sixpence more is not to be had that way. Are you lucky at the races?'

"'Never win a sixpence.'

"'What can you do at whist?'

"'Revoke, and get cursed by my partner; devil a more!'

"'That 's mighty bad, for otherwise, we might arrange something for you. Well, I only see one thing for it; you must marry. A wife with some money will get you out of your present difficulties; and we 'll manage that easily enough.'

"'Come, Dan,' said I, for Shaugh was dropping asleep; 'cheer up, old fellow. Donevan has found the way to pull us through our misfortunes. A girl with forty thousand pounds, the best cock shooting in Ireland, an old family, a capital cellar, all await ye, — rouse up, there!'

"'I 'm convanient,' said Shaugh, with a look intended to be knowing, but really very tipsy.

"'I did n't say much for her personal attractions, Captain,' said Mat; 'nor, indeed, did I specify the exact sum; but Mrs. Rogers Dooley, of Clonakilty, might be a princess —'

"'And so she shall be, Mat; the O'Shaughnessys were Kings of Ennis in the time of Nero and I 'm only waiting for a trifle of money to revive the title What 's her name?'

"'Mrs. Rogers Dooley.'

"'Here's her health, and long life to her, —

> 'And may the Devil cut the toes
> Of all her foes,
> That we may know them by their limping.'

"This benevolent wish uttered, Dan fell flat upon the hearth-rug, and was soon sound asleep. I must hasten on; so need only say that, before we parted that night, Mat and myself had finished the half-gallon bottle of Loughrea whiskey, and concluded a treaty for the hand and fortune of Mrs. Rogers Dooley. He being guaranteed a very handsome percentage on the property, and the lady being reserved for choice between Dan and myself, which, however, I was determined should fall upon my more fortunate friend.

"The first object which presented itself to my aching senses the following morning was a very spacious card of invitation from Mr. Jonas Malone, requesting me to favor him with the seductions of my society the next evening to a ball; at the bottom of which, in Mr. Donevan's hand, I read, —

"'Don't fail; you know who is to be there. I've not been idle since I saw you. Would the captain take twenty-five for the mare?'

"'So far so good,' thought I, as entering O'Shaughnessy's quarters, I discovered him endeavoring to spell out his card, which, however, had no postscript. We soon agreed that Mat should have his price; so sending a polite answer to the invitation, we despatched a still more civil note to the attorney, and begged of him, as a weak mark of esteem, to accept the mouse-colored mare as a present."

Here O'Shaughnessy sighed deeply, and even seemed affected by the souvenir.

"Come, Dan, we did it all for the best. Oh, O'Mealey, he was a cunning fellow; but no matter. We went to the ball, and to be sure, it was a great sight. Two hundred and fifty souls, where there was not good room for the odd fifty; such laughing, such squeezing, such pressing of hands and waists in the staircase, and then such a row and riot at the top, — four fiddles, a key bugle, and a bagpipe, playing 'Haste to the wedding,' amidst the crash of refreshment-trays, the tramp of feet, and the sounds of merriment on all sides!

"It 's only in Ireland, after all, people have fun. Old and young, merry and morose, the gay and cross-grained, are crammed into a lively country-dance; and ill-matched, ill-suited, go jigging away together to the blast of a bad band, till their heads, half turned by the noise, the heat, the novelty, and the hubbub, they all get as tipsy as if they were really deep in liquor.

"Then there is that particularly free-and-easy tone in every one about. Here go a couple capering daintily out of the ball-room to take a little fresh air on the stairs, where every step has its own separate flirtation party; there, a riotous old gentleman, with a boarding-school girl for his partner, has plunged smack into a party at loo, upsetting cards and counters, and drawing down curses innumerable. Here are a merry knot round the refreshments, and well they may be; for the negus is strong punch, and the biscuit is tipsy cake, — and all this with a running fire of good stories, jokes, and witticisms on all sides, in the laughter for which even the droll-looking servants join as heartily as the rest.

"We were not long in finding out Mrs. Rogers, who sat in the middle of a very high sofa, with her feet just touching the floor. She was short, fat, wore her hair in a crop, had a species of shining yellow skin, and a turned-up nose, all of which were by no means prepossessing. Shaugh and myself were too hard-up to be particular, and so we invited her to dance alternately for two consecutive hours, plying her assiduously with negus during the lulls in the music.

"Supper was at last announced, and enabled us to recruit for new efforts; and so after an awful consumption of fowl, pigeon-pie, ham, and brandy cherries, Mrs. Rogers brightened up considerably, and professed her willingness to join the dancers. As for us, partly from exhaustion, partly to stimulate our energies, and in some degree to drown reflection, we drank deep, and when we reached the drawing-room, not only the agreeable guests themselves, but even the furniture, the venerable chairs, and the stiff old sofa seemed performing 'Sir Roger de Coverley.' How we conducted ourselves till five in the morning, let our cramps confess; for we were both bed-ridden for ten days after. However, at last Mrs. Rogers gave in, and reclining gracefully upon a window-seat, pronounced it a most elegant party, and asked me to look for her shawl. While I perambulated the staircase with her bonnet on my head, and more wearing apparel than would stock a magazine, Shaugh was roaring himself hoarse in the street, calling Mrs. Rogers' coach.

"'Sure, Captain,' said the lady, with a tender leer, 'it 's only a chair.'

"'And here it is,' said I, surveying a very portly-looking old sedan, newly painted and varnished, that blocked up half the hall.

"'You 'll catch cold, my angel,' said Shaugh, in a whisper, for he was coming it very strong by this; 'get into the chair. Maurice, can't you find those fellows ?' said he to me, for the chairmen had gone down-stairs, and were making very merry among the servants.

"'She 's fast now,' said I, shutting the door to. 'Let us do the gallant thing, and carry her home ourselves.' Shaugh thought this a great notion; and in a minute we mounted the poles and sallied forth, amidst a great chorus of laughing from all the footmen, maids, and teaboys that filled the passage.

"'The big house, with the bow-window and the pillars, Captain,' said a fellow, as we issued upon our journey.

"'I know it,' said I. 'Turn to the left after you pass the square.'

"'Is n't she heavy ?' said Shaugh, as he meandered across the narrow streets with a sidelong motion that must have suggested to our fair inside passenger some notions of a sea voyage. In truth, I must confess our progress was rather a devious one, — now zig-zagging from side to side, now getting into a sharp trot, and then suddenly pulling up at a dead stop, or running the machine chuck against a wall, to enable us to stand still and gain breath.

"'Which way now?' cried he, as we swung round the angle of a street and entered the large market-place; 'I'm getting terribly tired.'

"'Never give in, Dan. Think of Clonakilty and the old lady herself.' Here I gave the chair a hoist that evidently astonished our fair friend, for a very imploring cry issued forth immediately after.

"'To the right, quick-step, forward, charge!' cried I; and we set off at a brisk trot down a steep narrow lane.

"'Here it is now, — the light in the window. Cheer up.'

"As I said this we came short up to a fine, portly-looking doorway, with great stone pillars and cornice.

"'Make yourself at home, Maurice,' said he; 'bring her in.' So saying, we pushed forward — for the door was open — and passed boldly into a great flagged hall, silent and cold, and dark as the night itself.

"'Are you sure we're right?' said he.

"'All right,' said I; 'go ahead.'

"And so we did, till we came in sight of a small candle that burned dimly at a distance from us.

"'Make for the light,' said I; but just as I said so Shaugh slipped and fell flat on the flagway. The noise of his fall sent up a hundred echoes in the silent building, and terrified us both dreadfully. After a minute's pause, by one consent we turned and made for the door, falling almost at every step, and frightened out of our senses, we came tumbling together into the porch, and out in the street, and never drew breath till we reached the barracks. Meanwhile let me return to Mrs. Rogers. The dear old lady, who had passed an awful time since she left the ball, had just rallied out of a fainting fit when we took to our heels; so after screaming and crying her best, she at last managed to open the top of the chair, and by dint of great exertions succeeded in forcing the door, and at length freed herself from bondage. She was leisurely groping her way round it in the dark, when her lamentations, being heard without, woke up the old sexton of the chapel, — for it was there we placed her, — who, entering cautiously with a light, no sooner caught a glimpse of the great black sedan and the figure beside it than he also took to his heels, and ran like a madman to the priest's house.

"'Come, your reverence, come, for the love of marcy! Sure did n't I see him myself! Oh, wirra, wirra!'

"'What is it, ye ould fool?' said M'Kenny.

"'It's Father Con Doran, your reverence, that was buried last week, and there he is up now, coffin and all, saying a midnight Mass as lively as ever.'

"Poor Mrs. Rogers, God help her! It was a trying sight for her when the priest and the two coadjutors and three little boys and the sexton all came in to lay her spirit; and the shock she received that night, they say, she never got over.

"Need I say, my dear O'Mealey, that our acquaintance with Mrs. Rogers was closed? The dear woman had a hard struggle for it afterwards. Her character was assailed by all the elderly ladies in Loughrea for going off in our company, and her blue satin, piped with scarlet, utterly ruined by a deluge of holy water bestowed on her by the pious sexton. It was in vain that she originated twenty different reports to mystify the world; and even ten pounds spent in Masses for the eternal repose of Father Con Doran only increased the laughter this unfortunate affair gave rise to. As for us, we exchanged into the line, and foreign service took us out of the road of duns, debts, and devilment, and we soon reformed, and eschewed such low company."

The day was breaking ere we separated; and amidst the rich and fragrant vapors that exhaled from the earth, the faint traces of sunlight dimly stealing told of the morning. My two friends set out for Torrijos, and I pushed boldly forward in the direction of the Alberche.

It was a strange thing that although but two days before the roads we were then travelling had been the line of retreat of the whole French army, not a vestige of their equipment nor a trace of their *matériel* had been left behind. In vain we searched each thicket by the wayside for some straggling soldier, some wounded or wearied man; nothing of the kind was to be seen. Except the deeply-rutted road, torn by the heavy wheels of the artillery, and the white ashes of a wood fire, nothing marked their progress.

Our journey was a lonely one. Not a man was to be met with. The houses stood untenanted; the doors lay open; no smoke wreathed from their deserted hearths. The peasantry had taken to the mountains; and although the plains were yellow with the ripe harvest, and the peaches hung temptingly upon the trees, all was deserted and forsaken. I had often seen the blackened walls and broken rafters, the traces of the wild revenge and reckless pillage of a retiring army. The ruined castle and the desecrated altar are sad things to look upon; but, somehow, a far heavier depression sunk into my heart as my eye ranged over the wide valleys and broad hills, all redolent of comfort, of beauty, and of happiness, and yet not one man to say, "This is my home; these are my household gods." The birds carolled gayly in each leafy thicket; the bright stream sung merrily as it rippled through the rocks; the tall corn, gently stirred by the breeze, seemed to swell the concert of sweet sounds; but no human voice awoke the echoes there. It was as if the earth was speaking in thankfulness to its Maker, while man, — ungrateful and unworthy man, — pursuing his ruthless path of devastation and destruction, had left no being to say, "I thank Thee for all these."

The day was closing as we drew near the Alberche, and came in sight of the watch-fires of the enemy. Far as the eye could reach their column extended, but in the dim twilight nothing could be seen with accuracy; yet from the position their artillery occupied, and the unceasing din of baggage wagons and heavy carriages towards the rear, I came to the conclusion that a still farther retreat was meditated. A picket of light cavalry was posted upon the river's bank, and seemed to watch with vigilance the approaches to the stream.

Our bivouac was a dense copse of pine-trees, exactly opposite to the French advanced posts, and there we passed the night, — fortunately a calm and starlight one; for we dared not light fires, fearful of attracting attention.

During the long hours I lay patiently watching the movements of the enemy till the dark shadows hid all from sight;

and even then, as my ears caught the challenge of a sentry or the footsteps of some officer in his round, my thoughts were riveted upon them, and a hundred vague fancies as to the future were based upon no stronger foundation than the clink of a firelock or the low-muttered song of a patrol.

Towards morning I slept; and when day broke my first glance was towards the river-side. But the French were gone, noiselessly, rapidly. Like one man that vast army had departed, and a dense column of dust towards the horizon alone marked the long line of march where the martial legions were retreating.

My mission was thus ended; and hastily partaking of the humble breakfast my friend Mike provided for me, I once more set out and took the road towards headquarters.

CHAPTER II.

THE SKIRMISH.

For several months after the battle of Talavera my life presented nothing which I feel worth recording. Our good fortune seemed to have deserted us when our hopes were highest; for from the day of that splendid victory we began our retrograde movement upon Portugal. Pressed hard by overwhelming masses of the enemy, we saw the fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida fall successively into their hands. The Spaniards were defeated wherever they ventured upon a battle; and our own troops, thinned by sickness and desertion, presented but a shadow of that brilliant army which only a few months previous had followed the retiring French beyond the frontiers of Portugal.

However willing I now am — and who is not — to recognize the genius and foresight of that great man who then held the destinies of the Peninsula within his hands, I confess at the time I speak of I could ill comprehend and still less feel contented with the successive retreats our forces made; and while the words Torres Vedras brought nothing to my mind but the last resting-place before embarkation, the sad fortunes of Corunna were now before me, and it was with a gloomy and desponding spirit I followed the routine of my daily duty.

During these weary months, if my life was devoid of stirring interest or adventure, it was not profitless. Constantly employed at the outposts, I became thoroughly inured to all the roughing of a soldier's life, and learned in the best of schools that tacit obedience which alone can form the subordinate or ultimately fit its possessor for command himself.

Humble and unobtrusive as such a career must ever be, it was not without its occasional rewards. From General Crawfurd I more than once obtained most kind mention in his despatches, and felt that I was not unknown or unnoticed by Sir Arthur Wellesley himself. At that time these testimonies, slight and passing as they were, contributed to the pride and glory of my existence; and even now — shall I confess it? — when some gray hairs are mingling with the brown, and when my old dragoon swagger is taming down into a kind of half-pay shamble, I feel my heart warm at the recollection of them.

Be it so; I care not who smiles at the avowal. I know of little better worth remembering as we grow old than what pleased us while we were young. With the memory of the kind words once spoken come back the still kinder looks of those who spoke them, and better than all, that early feeling of budding manhood, when there was neither fear nor distrust. Alas! these are the things, and not weak eyes and tottering limbs, which form the burden of old age. Oh, if we could only go on believing, go on trusting, go on hoping to the last, who would shed tears for the bygone feats of his youthful days, when the spirit that evoked them lived young and vivid as before?

But to my story. While Ciudad Rodrigo still held out against the besieging French, — its battered walls and breached ramparts sadly foretelling the fate inevitably impending, — we were ordered, together with the 16th Light Dragoons, to proceed to Gallegos, to reinforce Crawfurd's division, then forming a corps of observation upon Massena's movements.

The position he occupied was a most commanding one, — the crown of a long mountain ridge, studded with pine-copse and cork-trees, presenting every facility for light-infantry movements; and here and there gently sloping towards the plain, offering a field for cavalry manœuvres. Beneath, in the vast plain, were encamped the dark legions of France, their heavy siege-artillery planted against the doomed fortress, while clouds of their cavalry caracoled proudly before us, as if in taunting sarcasm at our inactivity.

Every artifice which his natural cunning could suggest, every taunt a Frenchman's vocabulary contains, had been used by Massena to induce Sir Arthur Wellesley to come to the assistance of the beleagured fortress; but in vain.

In vain he relaxed the energy of the siege, and affected carelessness. In vain he asserted that the English were either afraid or else traitors to their allies. The mind of him he thus assailed was neither accessible to menace nor to sarcasm. Patiently abiding his time, he watched the progress of events, and provided for that future which was to crown his country's arms with success and himself with undying glory.

Of a far different mettle was the general formed under whose orders we were now placed. Hot, passionate, and impetuous, relying upon bold and headlong heroism rather than upon cool judgment and well-matured plans, Crawfurd felt in war all the asperity and bitterness of a personal conflict. Ill brooking the insulting tone of the wily Frenchman, he thirsted for any occasion of a battle, and his proud spirit chafed against the colder counsels of his superior.

On the very morning we joined, the pickets brought in the intelligence that the French patrols were nightly in the habit of visiting the villages at the outposts and committing every species of cruel indignity upon the wretched inhabitants. Fired at this daring insult, our general resolved to cut them off, and formed two ambuscades for the purpose.

Six squadrons of the 14th were despatched to Villa del Puerco, three of the 16th to Baguetto, while some companies of the 95th, and the caçadores, supported by artillery, were ordered to hold themselves in reserve, for the enemy were in force at no great distance from us.

The morning was just breaking as an aide-de-camp galloped up with the intelligence that the French had been seen near the Villa del Puerco, a body of infantry and some cavalry having crossed the plain, and disappeared in that direction. While our colonel was forming us, with the intention of getting between them and their main body, the tramp of horses was heard in the wood behind, and in a few moments two officers rode up. The foremost, who was a short, stoutly-built man of about forty, with a bronzed face and eye of piercing black, shouted out as we wheeled into column: —

"Halt, there! Why, where the devil are you going?

That's your ground!" So saying, and pointing straight towards the village with his hand, he would not listen to our colonel's explanation that several stone fences and enclosures would interfere with cavalry movements, but added, "Forward, I say! Proceed!"

Unfortunately, the nature of the ground separated our squadron, as the colonel anticipated; and although we came on at a topping pace, the French had time to form in square upon a hill to await us, and when we charged, they stood firmly, and firing with a low and steady aim, several of our troopers fell. As we wheeled round, we found ourselves exactly in front of their cavalry coming out of Baguilles; so dashing straight at them, we revenged ourselves for our first repulse by capturing twenty-nine prisoners, and wounding several others.

The French infantry were, however, still unbroken; and Colonel Talbot rode boldly up with five squadrons of the 14th; but the charge, pressed home with all its gallantry, failed also, and the colonel fell mortally wounded, and fourteen of his troopers around him. Twice we rode round the square, seeking for a weak point, but in vain; the gallant Frenchman who commanded, Captain Guache, stood fearlessly amidst his brave followers, and we could hear him, as he called out from time to time, —

"C'est ça mes enfans! Très bien fait, mes braves!"

And at length they made good their retreat, while we returned to the camp, leaving thirty-two troopers and our brave colonel dead upon the field in this disastrous affair.

The repulse we had met with, so contrary to all our hopes and expectations, made that a most gloomy day to all of us. The brave fellows we had left behind us, the taunting cheer of the French infantry, the unbroken ranks against which we rode time after time in vain, never left our minds; and a sense of shame of what might be thought of us at headquarters rendered the reflection still more painful.

Our bivouac, notwithstanding all our efforts, was a sad one, and when the moon rose, some drops of heavy rain falling at intervals in the still, unruffled air threatened a night of storm; gradually the sky grew darker and darker, the clouds hung nearer to the earth, and a dense, thick mass of dark mist shrouded every object. The heavy cannonade of the siege was stilled; nothing betrayed that a vast army was encamped near us; their bivouac fires were even imperceptible; and the only sound we heard was the great bell of Ciudad Rodrigo as it struck the hour, and seemed, in the mournful cadence of its chime, like the knell of the doomed citadel.

The patrol which I commanded had to visit on its rounds the most advanced post of our position. This was a small farm-house, which, standing upon a little rising ledge of ground, was separated from the French lines by a little stream tributary to the Aguda. A party of the 14th were picketed here, and beneath them in the valley, scarce five hundred yards distant, was the detachment of cuirassiers which formed the French outpost. As we neared our picket, the deep voice of the sentry challenged us; and while all else was silent as the grave, we could hear from the opposite side the merry chorus of a French *chanson à boire*, with its clattering accompaniment of glasses, as some gay companions were making merry together.

Within the little hut which contained *our* fellows, the scene was a different one. The three officers who commanded sat moodily over a wretched fire of wet wood; a solitary candle dimly lighted the dismantled room, where a table but ill-supplied with cheer stood unminded and uncared for.

"Well, O'Malley," cried Baker, as I came in, "what is the night about? And what's Crawfurd for next?"

"We hear," cried another, "that he means to give battle to-morrow; but surely Sir Arthur's orders are positive enough. Gordon himself told me that he was forbidden to fight beyond the Coa, but to retreat at the first advance of the enemy."

"I'm afraid," replied I, "that retreating is his last thought just now. Ammunition has just been served out, and I know the horse artillery have orders to be in readiness by daybreak."

"All right," said Hampden, with a half-bitter tone.

"Nothing like going through with it. If he is to be brought to court-martial for disobedience, he 'll take good care we sha' n't be there to see it."

"Why, the French are fifty thousand strong!" said Baker. "Look there, what does that mean, now? That 's a signal from the town."

As he spoke a rocket of great brilliancy shot up into the sky, and bursting at length fell in millions of red lustrous sparks on every side, showing forth the tall fortress, and the encamped army around it, with all the clearness of noonday. It was a most splendid sight; and though the next moment all was dark as before, we gazed still fixedly into the gloomy distance, straining our eyes to observe what was hid from our view forever.

"That must be a signal," repeated Baker.

"Begad! if Crawfurd sees it he 'll interpret it as a reason for fighting. I trust he 's asleep by this time," said Hampden. "By-the-bye, O'Malley, did you see the fellows at work in the trenches? How beautifully clear it was towards the southward!"

"Yes, I remarked that! and what surprised me was the openness of their position in that direction. Towards the San Benito mole I could not see a man."

"Ah, they 'll not attack on that side; but if we really are —"

"Stay, Hampden!" said I, interrupting him, "a thought has just struck me. At sunset, I saw, through my telescope, the French engineers marking with their white tape the line of a new entrenchment in that quarter. Would it not be a glorious thing to move the tape, and bring the fellows under the fire of San Benito?"

"By Jove, O'Malley, that is a thought worth a troop to you!"

"Far more likely to forward his promotion in the next world than in this," said Baker, smiling.

"By no means," added I. "I marked the ground this evening, and have it perfectly in my mind. If we were to follow the bend of the river, I 'll be bound to come right upon the spot; by nearing the fortress we 'll escape the sentries; and all this portion is open to us."

The project thus loosely thrown out was now discussed in all its bearings. Whatever difficulties it presented were combated so much to our own satisfaction, that at last its very facility damped our ardor. Meanwhile the night wore on, and the storm of rain so long impending began to descend in very torrents; hissing along the parched ground, it rose in a mist, while overhead the heavy thunder rolled in long unbroken peals; the crazy door threatened to give way at each moment, and the whole building trembled to its foundation.

"Pass the brandy down here, Hampden, and thank your stars you 're where you are. Eh, O'Malley? You 'll defer your trip to San Benito for finer weather."

"Well, to come to the point," said Hampden, "I 'd rather begin my engineering at a more favorable season; but if O'Malley 's for it — "

"And O'Malley *is* for it," said I, suddenly.

"Then faith, I 'm not the man to balk his fancy; and as Crawfurd is so bent upon fighting to-morrow, it don't make much difference. Is it a bargain?"

"It is; here 's my hand on it."

"Come, come, boys, I 'll have none of this; we 've been prettily cut up this morning already. You shall not go upon this foolish excursion."

"Confound it, old fellow! it 's all very well for you to talk, with the majority before you, next step; but here we are, if peace came to-morrow, scarcely better than we left England. No, no; if O'Malley 's ready — and I see he is so before me — What have you got there? Oh, I see; that 's our tape line; capital fun, by George! The worst of it is, they 'll make us colonels of engineers. Now then, what 's your plan — on foot or mounted?"

"Mounted, and for this reason, the country is all open; if we are to have a run for it, our thoroughbreds ought to distance them; and as we must expect to pass some of their sentries, our only chance is on horseback."

"My mind is relieved of a great load," said Hampden; "I was trembling in my skin lest you should make it a walking party. I 'll do anything you like in the saddle, from robbing the mail to cutting out a frigate; but I never was much of a foot-pad."

"Well, Mike," said I, as I returned to the room with my trusty follower, "are the cattle to be depended on?"

"If we had a snaffle in Malachi Daly's mouth [my brown horse], I'd be afeared of nothing, sir; but if it comes to fencing, with that cruel bit, — but sure, you've a light hand, and let him have his head, if it's wall."

"By Jove, he thinks it a fox-chase!" said Hampden.

"Is n't it the same, sir?" said Mike, with a seriousness that made the whole party smile.

"Well, I hope we shall not be earthed, any way," said I. "Now, the next thing is, who has a lantern? Ah! the very thing; nothing better. Look to your pistols, Hampden; and Mike, here's a glass of grog for you; we'll want you. And now, one bumper for good luck. Eh, Baker, won't you pledge us?"

"And spare a little for me," said Hampden. "How it does rain! If one did n't expect to be water-proofed before morning, one really would n't go out in such weather."

While I busied myself in arranging my few preparations, Hampden proceeded gravely to inform Mike that we were going to the assistance of the besieged fortress, which could not possibly go on without us.

"Tare and ages!" said Mike, "that's mighty quare; and the blue rocket was a letter of invitation, I suppose?"

"Exactly," said Hampden; "and you see there's no ceremony between us. We'll just drop in, in the evening, in a friendly way."

"Well, then, upon my conscience, I'd wait, if I was you, till the family was n't in confusion. They have enough on their hands just now."

"So you'll not be persuaded?" said Baker. "Well, I frankly tell you, that come what will of it, as your senior officer I'll report you to-morrow. I'll not risk myself for any such hair-brained expeditions."

"A mighty pleasant look-out for me," said Mike; "if I'm not shot to-night, I may be flogged in the morning."

This speech once more threw us into a hearty fit of laughter, amidst which we took leave of our friends, and set forth upon our way.

CHAPTER III.

THE LINES OF CIUDAD RODRIGO.

The small, twinkling lights which shone from the ramparts of Ciudad Rodrigo were our only guide, as we issued forth upon our perilous expedition. The storm raged, if possible, even more violently than before, and gusts of wind swept along the ground with the force of a hurricane; so that at first, our horses could scarcely face the tempest. Our path lay along the little stream for a considerable way; after which, fording the rivulet, we entered upon the open plain, taking care to avoid the French outpost on the extreme left, which was marked by a bivouac fire, burning under the heavy downpour of rain, and looking larger through the dim atmosphere around it.

I rode foremost, followed closely by Hampden and Mike; not a word was spoken after we crossed the stream. Our plan was, if challenged by a patrol, to reply in French and press on; so small a party could never suggest the idea of attack, and we hoped in this manner to escape.

The violence of the storm was such that many of our precautions as to silence were quite unnecessary; and we had advanced to a considerable extent into the plain before any appearance of the encampment struck us. At length, on mounting a little rising ground, we perceived several fires stretching far away to the northward; while still to our left, there blazed one larger and brighter than the others. We now found that we had not outflanked their position as we intended, and learning from the situation of the fires, that we were still only at the outposts, we pressed sharply forward, directing our course by the twin stars that shone from the fortress.

"How heavy the ground is here!" whispered Hampden, as our horses sunk above the fetlocks. "We had better stretch away to the right; the rise of the hill will favor us."

"Hark!" said I; "did you not hear something? Pull up, — silence now. Yes, there they come. It 's a patrol; I hear their tramp." As I spoke, the measured tread of infantry was heard above the storm, and soon after a lantern was seen coming along the causeway near us. The column passed within a few yards of where we stood. I could even recognize the black covering of the shakos as the light fell on them. "Let us follow them," whispered I; and the next moment we fell in upon their track, holding our cattle well in hand, and ready to start at a moment.

"*Qui va là?*" a sentry demanded.

"*La deuxième division*," cried a hoarse voice.

"*Halte là! la consigne?*"

"*Wagram!*" repeated the same voice as before, while his party resumed their march; and the next moment the patrol was again upon his post, silent and motionless as before.

"*En avant, Messieurs!*" said I, aloud, as soon as the infantry had proceeded some distance, — "*en avant!*"

"*Qui va là?*" demanded the sentry, as we came along at a sharp trot.

"*L'état-major, Wagram!*" responded I, pressing on without drawing rein; and in a moment we had regained our former position behind the infantry. We had scarcely time to congratulate ourselves upon the success of our scheme, when a tremendous clattering noise in front, mingled with the galloping of horses and the cracking of whips, announced the approach of the artillery as they came along by a narrow road which bisected our path; and as they passed between us and the column, we could hear the muttered sentences of the drivers, cursing the unseasonable time for an attack, and swearing at their cattle in no measured tones.

"Did you hear that?" whispered Hampden; "the battery is about to be directed against the San Benito, which must be far away to the left. I heard one of the troop saying that they were to open their fire at daybreak."

"All right, now," said I; "look there!"

From the hill we now stood upon a range of lanterns was distinctly visible, stretching away for nearly half a mile.

"There are the trenches; they must be at work, too. See how the lights are moving from place to place! Straight now. Forward!"

So saying, I pressed my horse boldly on.

We had not proceeded many minutes when the sounds of galloping were heard coming along behind us.

"To the right, in the hollow," cried I. "Be still."

Scarcely had we moved off when several horsemen galloped up, and drawing their reins to breathe their horses up the hill, we could hear their voices as they conversed together.

In the few broken words we could catch, we guessed that the attack upon San Benito was only a feint to induce Crawfurd to hold his position, while the French, marching upon his flank and front, were to attack him with overwhelming masses and crush him.

"You hear what's in store for us, O'Malley?" whispered Hampden. "I think we could not possibly do better than hasten back with the intelligence."

"We must not forget what we came for, first," said I; and the next moment we were following the horsemen, who from their helmets seemed to be horse-artillery officers.

The pace our guides rode at showed us that they knew their ground. We passed several sentries, muttering something at each time, and seeming as if only anxious to keep up with our party.

"They've halted," said I. "Now to the left there; gently here, for we must be in the midst of their lines. Ha! I knew we were right. See there!"

Before us, now, at a few hundred yards, we could perceive a number of men engaged upon the field. Lights were moving from place to place rapidly, while immediately in front a strong picket of cavalry were halted.

"By Jove! there's sharp work of it to-night," whispered Hampden. "They do intend to surprise us to-morrow."

"Gently now, to the left," said I, as cautiously skirting the little hill, I kept my eye firmly fixed upon the watch-fire.

The storm, which for some time had abated considerably, was now nearly quelled, and the moon again peeped forth amidst masses of black and watery clouds.

"What good fortune for us!" thought I, at this moment, as I surveyed the plain before me.

"I say, O'Malley, what are those fellows at yonder, where the blue light is burning?"

"Ah! the very people we want; these are the sappers. Now for it; that's our ground. We'll soon come upon their track now."

We pressed rapidly forward, passing an infantry party as we went. The blue light was scarcely a hundred yards off; we could even hear the shouting of the officers to their men in the trenches, when suddenly my horse came down upon his head, and rolling over, crushed me to the earth.

"Not hurt, my boy," cried I, in a subdued tone, as Hampden jumped down beside me.

It was the angle of a trench I had fallen into; and though both my horse and myself felt stunned for the moment, we rallied the next minute.

"Here is the very spot," said I. "Now, Mike, catch the bridles and follow us closely."

Guiding ourselves along the edge of the trench, we crept stealthily forward; the only watch-fire near was where the engineer party was halted, and our object was to get outside of this.

"My turn this time," said Hampden, as he tripped suddenly, and fell head foremost upon the grass.

As I assisted him to rise, something caught my ankle, and on stooping I found it was a cord pegged fast into the ground, and lying only a few inches above it.

"Now, steady! See here; this is their working line. Pass your hand along it there, and let us follow it out."

While Hampden accordingly crept along on one side, I tracked the cord upon the other. Here I found it terminating upon a small mound, where probably some battery was to be erected. I accordingly gathered it carefully up, and was returning towards my friend, when what was my horror to hear Mike's voice, conversing, as it seemed to me, with some one in French.

I stood fixed to the spot, my very heart beating almost in my mouth as I listened.

"*Qui êtes-vous donc, mon ami?*" inquired a hoarse, deep voice, a few yards off.

"*Bon cheval, non* beast, *sacré nom de Dieu!*" A hearty burst of laughter prevented my hearing the conclusion of Mike's French.

I now crept forward upon my hands and knees, till I could catch the dark outline of the horses, one hand fixed upon my pistol trigger, and my sword drawn in the other. Meanwhile the dialogue continued.

"*Vous êtes d'Alsace, n'est-ce-pas?*" asked the Frenchman, kindly supposing that Mike's French savored of Strasburg.

"Oh, blessed Virgin! av I might shoot him," was the muttered reply.

Before I had time to see the effect of the last speech, I pressed forward with a bold spring, and felled the Frenchman to the earth. My hand had scarcely pressed upon his mouth, when Hampden was beside me. Snatching up the pistol I let fall, he held it to the man's chest and commanded him to be silent. To unfasten his girdle and bind the Frenchman's hands behind him, was the work of a moment; and as the sharp click of the pistol-cock seemed to calm his efforts to escape, we soon succeeded in fastening a handkerchief tight across his mouth, and the next minute he was placed behind Mike's saddle, firmly attached to this worthy individual by his sword-belt.

"Now, a clear run home for it, and a fair start," said Hampden, as he sprang into the saddle.

"Now, then, for it," I replied, as turning my horse's head towards our lines, I dashed madly forward.

The moon was again obscured, but still the dark outline of the hill which formed our encampment was discernible on the horizon. Riding side by side, on we hurried, — now splashing through the deep wet marshes, now plunging through small streams. Our horses were high in mettle, and we spared them not. By taking a wide *détour* we had outflanked the French pickets, and were almost out of all risk, when suddenly on coming to the verge of rather a steep hill, we perceived beneath us a strong cavalry picket standing around a watch-fire; their horses were ready saddled, the men accoutred, and quite prepared for the field. While we conversed together in whispers as to the course to follow, our deliberations were very rapidly cut short. The French prisoner, who hitherto had given neither trouble nor resistance, had managed to free his mouth from the encumbrance of the handkerchief; and as we stood quietly discussing our plans, with one tremendous effort he endeavored to hurl himself and Mike from the saddle, shouting out as he did so, —

"*A moi camarades! à moi!*"

Hampden's pistol leaped from the holster as he spoke, and levelling it with a deadly aim, he pulled the trigger; but I threw up his arm, and the ball passed high above his head. To have killed the Frenchman would have been to lose my faithful follower, who struggled manfully with his adversary, and at length by throwing himself flatly forward upon the mane of his horse, completely disabled him. Meanwhile the picket had sprung to their saddles, and looked wildly about on every side.

Not a moment was to be lost; so turning our horses' heads towards the plain, away we went. One loud cheer announced to us that we had been seen, and the next instant the clash of the pursuing cavalry was heard behind us. It was now entirely a question of speed, and little need we have feared had Mike's horse not been doubly weighted. However, as we still had considerably the start, and the gray dawn of day enabled us to see the ground, the odds were in our favor. "Never let your horse's head go," was my often repeated direction to Mike, as he spurred with all the desperation of madness. Already the low meadow-land was in sight which flanked the stream we had crossed in the morning, but unfortunately the heavy rains had swollen it now to a considerable depth, and the muddy current, choked with branches of trees and great stones, was hurrying down like a torrent. "Take the river! never flinch it!" was my cry to my companions, as I turned my head and saw a French dragoon, followed by two others, gaining rapidly upon us. As I spoke, Mike dashed in, followed by Hampden, and the same moment the sharp ring of a carbine whizzed past me. To take off the pursuit from the others, I now wheeled my horse suddenly round, as if I feared to take the stream, and dashed along by the river's bank.

Beneath me in the foaming current the two horsemen labored, — now stemming the rush of water, now reeling almost beneath. A sharp cry burst from Mike as I looked,

and I saw the poor fellow bend nearly to his saddle. I could see no more, for the chase was now hot upon myself. Behind me rode a French dragoon, his carbine pressed tightly to his side, ready to fire as he pressed on in pursuit. I had but one chance; so drawing my pistol I wheeled suddenly in my saddle, and fired straight at him. The Frenchman fell, while a regular volley from his party rung around me, one ball striking my horse, and another lodging in the pommel of my saddle. The noble animal reeled nearly to the earth, but as if rallying for a last effort, sprang forward with renewed energy, and plunged boldly into the river.

For a moment, so sudden was my leap, my pursuers lost sight of me; but the bank being somewhat steep, the efforts of my horse to climb again discovered me, and before I reached the field two pistol-balls took effect upon me, — one slightly grazed my side, but my bridle-arm was broken by the other, and my hand fell motionless to my side. A cheer of defiance was, however, my reply, as I turned round in my saddle, and the next moment I was far beyond the range of their fire.

Not a man durst follow, and the last sight I had of them was the dismounted group who stood around their dead comrade. Before me rode Hampden and Mike, still at top speed, and never turning their heads backwards. I hastened after them; but my poor, wounded horse, nearly hamstrung by the shot, became dead lame, and it was past daybreak ere I reached the first outposts of our lines.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOCTOR.

"And his wound? Is it a serious one?" said a round, full voice, as the doctor left my room at the conclusion of his visit.

"No, sir; a fractured bone is the worst of it, — the bullet grazed, but did not cut the artery, and as —"

"Well, how soon will he be about again?"

"In a few weeks, if no fever sets in."

"There 's no objection to my seeing him? — a few minutes only, — I 'll be cautious." So saying, and as it seemed to me, without waiting for a reply, the door was opened by an aide-de-camp, who, announcing General Crawfurd, closed it again, and withdrew.

The first glance I threw upon the general enabled me to recognize the officer who, on the previous morning, had ridden up to the picket and given us the orders to charge. I essayed to rise a little as he came forward; but he motioned me with his hand to lie still, while, placing a chair close beside my bed, he sat down.

"Very sorry for your mishap, sir, but glad it is no worse. Moreton says that nothing of consequence is injured; there, you must n't speak except I ask you. Hampden has told me everything necessary; at least as far as he knew. Is it your opinion, also, that any movement is in contemplation; and from what circumstance?"

I immediately explained, and as briefly as I was able, the reasons for suspecting such, with which he seemed quite satisfied. I detailed the various changes in the positions of the troops that were taking place during the night, the march of the artillery, and the strong bodies of cavalry that were posted in reserve along the river.

"Very well, sir; they 'll not move; your prisoner, quartermaster of an infantry battalion, says not, also. Yours was a bold stroke, but could not possibly have been of service, and the best thing I can do for you is not to mention it, — a court-martial 's but a poor recompense for a gun-shot wound. Meanwhile, when this blows over, I 'll appoint you on my personal staff. There, not a word, I beg; and now, good-by."

So saying, and waving me an adieu with his hand, the gallant veteran withdrew before I could express my gratitude for his kindness.

I had little time for reflecting over my past adventure, such numbers of my brother officers poured in upon me. All the doctor's cautions respecting quietness and rest were disregarded, and a perfect levee sat the entire morning in my bed-room. I was delighted to learn that Mike's wound, though painful at the moment, was of no consequence; and indeed Hampden, who escaped both steel and shot, was the worst off among us, — his plunge in the river having brought on an ague he had labored under years before.

"The illustrious Maurice has been twice here this morning, but they would n't admit him. Your Scotch physician is afraid of his Irish *confrère*, and they had a rare set-to about Galen and Hippocrates outside," said Baker.

"By-the-bye," said another, "did you see how Sparks looked when Quill joined us? Egad, I never saw a fellow in such a fright; he reddened up, then grew pale, turned his back, and slunk away at the very first moment."

"Yes, I remember it. We must find out the reason; for Maurice, depend upon it, has been hoaxing the poor fellow."

"Well, O'Malley," growled out the senior major, "you certainly did give Hampden a benefit. He 'll not trust himself in such company again; and begad, he says, the man is as bad as the master. That fellow of yours never let go his prisoner till he reached the quartermaster-general, and they were both bathed in blood by that time."

"Poor Mike! we must do something for him."

"Oh, he 's as happy as a king! Maurice has been in to see him, and they 've had a long chat about Ireland, and all the national pastimes of whiskey drinking and smashing skulls. My very temples ache at the recollection."

"Is Mister O'Mealey at home?" said a very rich Cork accent, as the well-known and most droll features of Dr. Maurice Quill appeared at the door.

"Come in, Maurice," said the major; "and for Heaven's sake, behave properly. The poor fellow must not have a row about his bedside."

"A row, a row! Upon my conscience, it is little you know about a row, and there 's worse things going than a row. Which leg is it?"

"It 's an arm, Doctor, I 'm happy to say."

"Not your punch hand, I hope. No; all 's right. A neat fellow you have for a servant, that Mickey Free. I was asking him about a townsman of his own, — one Tim Delany, — the very cut of himself, the best servant I ever had. I never could make out what became of him. Old Hobson, of the 95th, gave him to me, saying, 'There he is for you, Maurice, and a bigger thief and a greater blackguard there 's not in the 60th.'

"'Strong words,' said I.

"'And true,' said he; 'he 'd steal your molar tooth while you were laughing at him.'

"'Let me have him, and try my hand on him, anyway. I 've got no one just now. Anything is better than nothing.'

"Well, I took Tim, and sending for him to my room, I locked the door, and sitting down gravely before him, explained in a few words that I was quite aware of his little propensities.

"'Now,' said I, 'if you like to behave well, I 'll think you as honest as the chief-justice; but if I catch you stealing, if it be only the value of a brass snuff-box, I 'll have you flogged before the regiment as sure as my name 's Maurice.'

"Oh, I wish you heard the volley of protestations that fell from him fast as hail. He was a calumniated man; the world conspired to wrong him; he was never a thief nor a rogue in his life. He had a weakness, he confessed, for the ladies; but except that, he hoped he might die so thin that he could shave himself with his shin-bone if he ever so much as took a pinch of salt that was n't his own.

"However this might be, nothing could be better than the way Tim and I got on together. Everything was in its place, nothing missing; and in fact, for upwards of a year, I went on wondering when he was to show out in his true colors, for hitherto he had been a phœnix.

"At last, — we were quartered in Limerick at the time, — every morning used to bring accounts of all manner of petty thefts in the barrack, — one fellow had lost his belt, another his shoes, a third had three-and-sixpence in his pocket when he went to bed and woke without a farthing, and so on. Everybody save myself was mulct of something. At length some rumors of Tim's former propensities got abroad; suspicion was excited; my friend Delany was rigidly watched, and some very dubious circumstances attached to the way he spent his evenings.

"My brother officers called upon me about the matter, and although nothing had transpired like proof, I sent for Tim, and opened my mind on the subject.

"You may talk of the look of conscious innocence, but I defy you to conceive anything finer than the stare of offended honor Tim gave me as I began.

"'They say it's me, Doctor,' said he, 'do they? And you, — you believe them. You allow them to revile me that way? Well, well, the world is come to a pretty pass, anyhow! Now, let me ask your honor a few questions? How many shirts had yourself when I entered your service? Two, and one was more like a fishing net! And how many have ye now? Eighteen; ay, eighteen bran new cambric ones, — devil a hole in one of them! How many pair of stockings had you? Three and an odd one. You have two dozen this minute. How many pocket handkerchiefs? One, — devil a more! You could only blow your nose two days in the week, and now you may every hour of the twenty-four! And as to the trifling articles of small value, snuff-boxes, gloves, bootjacks, nightcaps, and —'

"'Stop, Tim, that's enough —'

"'No, sir, it is not,' said Tim, drawing himself up to his full height; 'you have wounded my feelings in a way I can't forget. It is impossible we can have that mutual respect our position demands. Farewell, farewell, Doctor, and forever!'

"Before I could say another word, the fellow had left the room, and closed the door after him; and from that hour to this I never set eyes on him."

In this vein did the worthy doctor run on till some more discreet friend suggested that however well-intentioned the visit, I did not seem to be fully equal to it, — my flushed cheek and anxious eye betraying that the fever of my wound had commenced. They left me, therefore, once more alone, and to my solitary musings over the vicissitudes of my fortune.

CHAPTER V.

THE COA.

Within a week from the occurrence of the events just mentioned, Ciudad Rodrigo surrendered, and Crawfurd assumed another position beneath the walls of Almeida. The Spanish contingent having left us, we were reinforced by the arrival of two battalions, renewed orders being sent not to risk a battle, but if the French should advance, to retire beyond the Coa.

On the evening of the 21st of July a strong body of French cavalry advanced into the plain, supported by some heavy guns; upon which Crawfurd retired upon the Coa, intending, as we supposed, to place that river between himself and the enemy. Three days, however, passed over without any movement upon either side, and we still continued, with a force of scarcely four thousand infantry and a thousand dragoons, to stand opposite to an army of nearly fifty thousand men. Such was our position as the night of the 24th set in. I was sitting alone in my quarters. Mike, whose wound had been severer than at first was supposed, had been sent to Almeida, and I was musing in solitude upon the events of the campaign, when the noise and bustle without excited my attention, — the roll of artillery wagons, the clash of musketry, and the distant sounds of marching, all proved that the troops were effecting some new movement, and I burned with anxiety to learn what it was. My brother officers, however, came not as usual to my quarters; and although I waited with impatience while the hours rolled by, no one appeared.

Long, low moaning gusts of wind swept along the earth, carrying the leaves as they tore them from the trees, and mingling their sad sounds with the noises of the retiring troops; for I could perceive that gradually the sounds grew more and more remote, and only now and then could I trace their position as the roll of a distant drum swelled upon the breeze, or the more shrill cry of a pibroch broke upon my ear. A heavy downpour of rain followed soon after, and in its unceasing plash drowned all other sounds.

As the little building shook beneath the peals of loud thunder, the lightning flashed in broad sheets upon the rapid river, which, swollen and foaming, dashed impetuously beside my window. By the uncertain but vivid glare of the flashes, I endeavored to ascertain where our force was posted, but in vain. Never did I witness such a night of storm, — the deep booming of the thunder seeming never for a moment to cease, while the rush of the torrent grew gradually louder, till at length it swelled into one deep and sullen roar like that of distant artillery.

Weak and nervous as I felt from the effects of my wound, feverish and exhausted by days of suffering and sleepless nights, I paced my little room with tottering but impatient steps. The sense of my sad and imprisoned state impressed me deeply; and while from time to time I replenished my fire, and hoped to hear some friendly step upon the stair, my heart grew gradually heavier, and every gloomy and depressing thought suggested itself to my imagination. My most constant impression was that the troops were retiring beyond the Coa, and that, forgotten in the haste and confusion of a night march, I had been left behind to fall a prisoner to the enemy.

The sounds of the troops retiring gradually farther and farther favored the idea, in which I was still more strengthened on finding that the peasants who inhabited the little hut had departed, leaving me utterly alone. From the moment I ascertained this fact, my impatience knew no bounds; and in proportion as I began to feel some exertion necessary on my part, so much more did my nervousness increase my debility, and at last I sank exhausted upon my bed, while a cold perspiration broke out upon my temples.

I have mentioned that the Coa was immediately beneath the house; I must also add that the little building occupied the angle of a steep but narrow gorge which descended from the plain to the bridge across the stream. This, as far as I knew, was the only means we possessed of passing the river; so that, when the last retiring sounds of the troops were heard by me, I began to suspect that Crawfurd, in compliance with his orders, was making a backward movement, leaving the bridge open to the French, to draw them on to his line of march, while he should cross over at some more distant point.

As the night grew later, the storm seemed to increase; the waves of the foaming river dashed against the frail walls of the hut, while its roof, rent by the blast, fell in fragments upon the stream, and all threatened a speedy and perfect ruin.

How I longed for morning! The doubt and uncertainty I suffered nearly drove me distracted. Of all the casualties my career as a soldier opened, none had such terrors for me as imprisonment; the very thought of the long years of inaction and inglorious idleness was worse than any death. My wounds, and the state of fever I was in, increased the morbid dread upon me, and had the French captured me at the time, I know not that madness of which I was not capable. Day broke at last, but slowly and sullenly; the gray clouds hurried past upon the storm, pouring down the rain in torrents as they went, and the desolation and dreariness on all sides was scarcely preferable to the darkness and gloom of night. My eyes were turned ever towards the plain, across which the winter wind bore the plashing rain in vast sheets of water; the thunder crashed louder and louder; but except the sounds of the storm none others met my ear. Not a man, not a human figure could I see, as I strained my sight towards the distant horizon.

The morning crept over, but the storm abated not, and the same unchanged aspect of dreary desolation prevailed without. At times I thought I could hear, amidst the noises of the tempest, something like the roll of distant artillery; but the thunder swelled in sullen roar above all, and left me uncertain as before.

At last, in a momentary pause of the storm, a tremendous peal of heavy guns caught my ear, followed by the long rattling of small-arms. My heart bounded with ecstasy. The thoughts of the battle-field, with all its changing fortunes, was better, a thousand times better, than the despairing sense of desertion I labored under. I listened now with eagerness, but the rain bore down again in torrents, and the crumbling walls and falling timbers left no other sounds to be heard. Far as my eye could reach, nothing could still be seen save the dreary monotony of the vast plain, undulating slightly here and there, but unmarked by a sign of man.

Far away towards the horizon I had remarked for some time past that the clouds resting upon the earth grew blacker and blacker, spreading out to either side in vast masses, and not broken or wafted along like the rest. As I watched the phenomenon with an anxious eye, I perceived the dense mass suddenly appear, as it were, rent asunder, while a volume of liquid flame rushed wildly out, throwing a lurid glare on every side. One terrific clap, louder than any thunder, shook the air at this moment, while the very earth trembled beneath the shock.

As I hesitated what it might be, the heavy din of great guns again was heard, and from the midst of the black smoke rode forth a dark mass, which I soon recognized as the horse-artillery at full gallop. They were directing their course towards the bridge.

As they mounted the little rising ground, they wheeled and unlimbered with the speed of lightning, just as a strong column of cavalry showed above the ridge. One tremendous discharge again shook the field, and ere the smoke cleared away they were again far in retreat.

So much was my attention occupied with this movement that I had not perceived the long line of infantry that came from the extreme left, and were now advancing also towards the bridge at a brisk quick-step; scattered bodies of cavalry came up from different parts, while from the little valley, every now and then, a rifleman would mount the rising ground, turning to fire as he retreated. All this boded a rapid and disorderly retreat; and although as yet I could see nothing of the pursuing enemy, I knew too well the relative forces of each to have a doubt for the result.

At last the head of a French column appeared above the mist, and I could plainly distinguish the gestures of the officers as they hurried their men onwards. Meanwhile a loud hurra attracted my attention, and I turned my eye towards the road which led to the river. Here a small body of the 95th had hurriedly assembled, and formed again, were standing to cover the retreat of the broken infantry as they passed on eagerly to the bridge; in a second after the French cuirassiers appeared. Little anticipating resistance from a flying and disordered mass, they rode headlong forward, and although the firm attitude and steady bearing of the Highlanders might have appalled them, they rode heedlessly down upon the square, sabring the very men in the front rank. Till now not a trigger had been pulled, when suddenly the word "Fire!" was given, and a withering volley of balls sent the cavalry column in shivers. One hearty cheer broke from the infantry in the rear, and I could hear "Gallant Ninety-fifth!" shouted on every side along the plain.

The whole vast space before me was now one animated battle-ground. Our own troops, retiring in haste before the overwhelming forces of the French, occupied every little vantage ground with their guns and light infantry, charges of cavalry coursing hither and thither; while, as the French pressed forward, the retreating columns again formed into squares to permit stragglers to come up. The rattle of small-arms, the heavy peal of artillery, the earthquake crash of cavalry, rose on every side, while the cheers which alternately told of the vacillating fortune of the fight rose amidst the wild pibroch of the Highlanders.

A tremendous noise now took place on the floor beneath me; and looking down, I perceived that a sergeant and party of sappers had taken possession of the little hut, and were busily engaged in piercing the walls for musketry; and before many minutes had elapsed, a company of the Rifles were thrown into the building, which, from its commanding position above the road, enfiladed the whole line of march. The officer in command briefly informed me that we had been attacked that morning by the French in force, and "devilishly well thrashed;" that we were now in retreat beyond the Coa, where we ought to have been three days previously, and desired me to cross the bridge and get myself out of the way as soon as I possibly could.

A twenty-four pounder from the French lines struck the angle of the house as he spoke, scattering the mortar and broken bricks about us on all sides. This was warning sufficient for me, wounded and disabled as I was; so taking the few things I could save in my haste, I hurried from the hut, and descending the path, now slippery by the heavy rain, I took my way across the bridge, and established myself on a little rising knoll of ground beyond, from which a clear view could be obtained of the whole field.

I had not been many minutes in my present position ere the pass which led down to the bridge became thronged with troops, wagons, ammunition carts, and hospital stores, pressing thickly forward amidst shouting and uproar; the hills on either side of the way were crowded with troops, who formed as they came up, the artillery taking up their position on every rising ground. The firing had already begun, and the heavy booming of the large guns was heard at intervals amidst the rattling crash of musketry. Except the narrow road before me, and the high bank of the stream, I could see nothing; but the tumult and din, which grew momentarily louder, told that the tide of battle raged nearer and nearer. Still the retreat continued; and at length the heavy artillery came thundering across the narrow bridge followed by stragglers of all arms, and wounded, hurrying to the rear. The sharpshooters and the Highlanders held the heights above the stream, thus covering the retiring columns; but I could plainly perceive that their fire was gradually slackening, and that the guns which flanked their position were withdrawn, and everything bespoke a speedy retreat. A tremendous discharge of musketry at this moment, accompanied by a deafening cheer, announced the advance of the French, and soon the head of the Highland brigade was seen descending towards the bridge, followed by the Rifles and the 95th; the cavalry, consisting of the 11th and 14th Light Dragoons, were now formed in column of attack, and the infantry deployed into line; and in an instant after, high above the din and crash of battle, I heard the word "Charge!" The rising crest of the hill hid them from my sight, but my heart bounded with ecstasy as I listened to the clanging sound of the cavalry advance. Meanwhile the infantry pressed on, and forming upon the bank, took up a strong position in front of the bridge; the heavy guns were also unlimbered, riflemen scattered through the low copse-wood, and every precaution taken to defend the pass to the last. For a moment all my attention was riveted to the movements upon our own side of the stream, when suddenly the cavalry bugle sounded the recall, and the same moment the staff came galloping across the bridge. One officer I could perceive, covered with orders and trappings, his head was bare, and his horse, splashed with blood and foam, moved lamely and with difficulty; he turned in the middle of the bridge, as if irresolute whether to retreat farther. One glance at him showed me the bronzed, manly features of our leader. Whatever his resolve, the matter was soon decided for him, for the cavalry came galloping swiftly down the slope, and in an instant the bridge was blocked up by the retreating forces, while the French as suddenly appearing above the height, opened a plunging fire upon their defenceless enemies; their cheer of triumph was answered by our fellows from the opposite bank, and a heavy cannonade thundered along the rocky valley, sending up a hundred echoes as it went.

The scene now became one of overwhelming interest; the French, posting their guns upon the height, replied to our fire, while their line, breaking into skirmishers, descended the banks to the river's edge, and poured in one sheet of galling musketry. The road to the bridge, swept by our artillery, presented not a single file; and although a movement among the French announced the threat of an attack, the deadly service of the artillery seemed to pronounce it hopeless.

A strong cavalry force stood inactively spectators of the combat, on the French side, among whom I now remarked some bustle and preparation, and as I looked an officer rode boldly to the river's edge, and spurring his horse forward, plunged into the stream. The swollen and angry torrent, increased by the late rains, boiled like barm, and foamed around him as he advanced; when suddenly his horse appeared to have lost its footing, and the rapid current, circling around him, bore him along with it. He labored madly, but in vain, to retrace his steps; the rolling torrent rose above his saddle, and all that his gallant steed could do was barely sufficient to keep afloat; both man and horse were carried down between the contending armies. I could see him wave his hand to his comrades, as if in adieu. One deafening cheer of admiration rose from the French lines, and the next moment he was seen to fall from his seat, and his body, shattered with balls, floated mournfully upon the stream.

This little incident, to which both armies were witnesses, seemed to have called forth all the fiercer passions of the contending forces; a loud yell of taunting triumph rose from the Highlanders, responded to by a cry of vengeance from the French, and the same moment the head of a column was seen descending the narrow causeway to the bridge, while an officer with a whole blaze of decorations and crosses sprang from his horse and took the lead. The little drummer, a child of scarcely ten years old, tripped gayly on, beating his little *pas des charge*, seeming rather like the play of infancy than the summons to death and carnage, as the heavy guns of the French opened a volume of fire and flame to cover the attacking column. For a moment all was hid from our eyes; the moment after the grape-shot swept along the narrow causeway; and the bridge, which but a second before was crowded with the life and courage of a noble column, was now one heap of dead and dying. The gallant fellow who led them on fell among the first rank, and the little child, as if kneeling, was struck dead beside the parapet; his fair hair floated across his cold features, and seemed in its motion to lend a look of life where the heart's throb had ceased forever. The artillery again re-opened upon us; and when the smoke had cleared away, we discovered that the French had advanced to the middle of the bridge and carried off the body of their general. Twice they essayed to cross, and twice the death-dealing fire of our guns covered the narrow bridge with slain, while by the wild pibroch of the 42d, swelling madly into notes of exultation and triumph, the Highlanders could scarcely be prevented from advancing hand to hand with the foe. Gradually the French slackened their fire, their great guns were one by one withdrawn from the heights, and a dropping, irregular musketry at intervals sustained the fight, which, ere sunset, ceased altogether; and thus ended "The Battle of the Coa!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE NIGHT MARCH.

Scarcely had the night fallen when our retreat commenced. Tired and weary as our brave fellows felt, but little repose was allowed them; their bivouac fires were blazing brightly, and they had just thrown themselves in groups around them, when the word to fall in was passed from troop to troop, and from battalion to battalion, — no trumpet, no bugle called them to their ranks. It was necessary that all should be done noiselessly and speedily; while, therefore, the wounded were marched to the front, and the heavy artillery with them, a brigade of light four pounders and two squadrons of cavalry held the heights above the bridge, and the infantry, forming into three columns, began their march.

My wound, forgotten in the heat and excitement of the conflict, was now becoming excessively painful, and I gladly availed myself of a place in a wagon, where, stretched upon some fresh straw, with no other covering save the starry sky, I soon fell sound asleep, and neither the heavy jolting of the rough conveyance, nor the deep and rutty road, were able to disturb my slumbers. Still through my sleep I heard the sounds around me, the heavy tramp of infantry, the clash of the moving squadrons, and the dull roll of artillery; and ever and anon the half-stifled cry of pain, mingling with the reckless carol of some drinking-song, all flitted through my dreams, lending to my thoughts of home and friends a memory of glorious war.

All the vicissitudes of a soldier's life passed then in review before me, elicited in some measure by the things about. The pomp and grandeur, the misery and meanness, the triumph, the defeat, the moment of victory, and the hour of death were there, and in that vivid dream I lived a life long.

I awoke at length, the cold and chilling air which follows midnight blew around me, and my wounded arm felt as though it were frozen. I tried to cover myself beneath the straw, but in vain; and as my limbs trembled and my teeth chattered, I thought again of home, where, at that moment, the poorest menial of my uncle's house was better lodged than I; and strange to say, something of pride mingled with the thought, and in my lonely heart a feeling of elation cheered me.

These reflections were interrupted by the sound of a voice near me, which I at once knew to be O'Shaughnessy's; he was on foot, and speaking evidently in some excitement.

"I tell you, Maurice, some confounded blunder there must be; sure, he was left in the cottage near the bridge, and no one ever saw him after."

"The French took it from the Rifles before we crossed the river. By Jove! I'll wager my chance of promotion against a pint of sherry, he'll turn up somewhere in the morning; those Galway chaps have as many lives as a cat."

"See, now, Maurice, I would n't for a full colonelcy anything would happen to him; I like the boy."

"So do I myself; but I tell you there's no danger of him. Did you ask Sparks anything?"

"Ask Sparks! God help you! Sparks would go off in a fit at the sight of me. No, no, poor creature! it's little use it would be my speaking to him."

"Why so, Doctor!" cried I, from my straw couch.

"May I never, if it's not him! Charley, my son, I'm glad you're safe. 'Faith, I thought you were on your way to Verdun by this time."

"Sure, I told you he'd find his way here — But, O'Mealey, dear, you're mighty could, — a rigor, as old M'Lauchlan would call it."

"E'en sae, Maister Quill," said a broad Scotch accent behind him; "and I canna see ony objection to giein' things their right names."

"The top of the morning to you," said Quill, familiarly patting him on the back; "how goes it, old Brimstone?"

The conversation might not have taken a very amicable turn had M'Lauchlan heard the latter part of this speech; but, as happily he was engaged unpacking a small canteen which he had placed in the wagon, it passed unnoticed.

"You 'll nae dislike a toothfu' of something warm, Major," said he, presenting a glass to O'Shaughnessy; "and if ye 'll permit me, Mr. O'Mealey, to help you —"

"A thousand thanks, Doctor; but I fear a broken arm —"

"There 's naething in the whiskey to prevent the proper formation of callus."

"By the rock of Cashel, it never made any one callous," said O'Shaughnessy, mistaking the import of the phrase.

"Ye are nae drinking frae the flask?" said the doctor, turning in some agitation towards Quill.

"Devil a bit, my darling. I 've a little horn convaniency here, that holds half-a-pint, nice measure."

I don't imagine that our worthy friend participated in Quill's admiration of the "convaniency," for he added, in a dry tone: —

"Ye may as weel tak your liquor frae a glass, like a Christian, as stick your nose in a coo's horn."

"By my conscience, you 're no small judge of spirits, wherever you learned it," said the major; "it 's like Islay malt!"

"I was aye reckoned a gude ane," said the doctor, "and my mither's brither Caimbogie had na his like in the north country. Ye may be heerd tell what he aince said to the Duchess of Argyle, when she sent for him to taste her claret."

"Never heard of it," quoth Quill; "let 's have it by all means. I 'd like to hear what the duchess said to him."

"It was na what the duchess said to him, but what he said to the duchess, ye ken. The way of it was this: My uncle Caimbogie was aye up at the castle, for besides his knowledge of liquor, there was nae his match for deer-stalking, or spearing a salmon, in those parts. He was a great, rough carle, it 's true; but ane ye 'd rather crack wi' than fight wi'.

"Weel, ae day they had a grand dinner at the duke's, and there were plenty o' great southern lords and braw leddies in velvets and satin; and vara muckle surprised they were at my uncle, when he came in wi' his tartan kilt, in full Highland dress, as the head of a clan ought to do. Caimbogie, however, pe'd nae attention to them; but he eat his dinner, and drank his wine, and talked away about fallow and red deer, and at last the duchess, for she was aye fond o' him, addressed him frae the head o' the table: —

"'Caimbogie,' quoth she, 'I'd like to hae your opinion about that wine. It's some the duke has just received, and we should like to hear what you think of it.'

"'It's nae sae bad, my leddy,' said my uncle; for ye see he was a man of few words, and never flattered onybody.

"'Then you don't approve much of it?' said the duchess.

"'I've drank better, and I've drank waur,' quo' he.

"'I'm sorry you don't like it, Caimbogie,' said the duchess, 'for it can never be popular now, — we have such a dependence upon your taste.'

"'I canna say ower muckle for my *taste*, my leddy, but ae thing I *will* say, — I've a most damnable *smell!*'

"I hear that never since the auld walls stood was there ever the like o' the laughing that followed; the puir duke himsel' was carried away, and nearly had a fit, and a' the grand lords and leddies a'most died of it. But see here, the carle has nae left a drap o' whiskey in the flask."

"The last glass I drained to your respectable uncle's health," said Quill, with a most professional gravity. "Now, Charlie, make a little room for me in the straw."

The doctor soon mounted beside me, and giving me a share of his ample cloak, considerably ameliorated my situation.

"So you knew Sparks, Doctor?" said I, with a strong curiosity to hear something of his early acquaintance.

"That I did: I knew him when he was an ensign in the 10th Foot; and, to say the truth, he is not much changed since that time, — the same lively look of a sick cod-fish about his gray eyes; the same disorderly wave of his yellow hair; the same whining voice, and that confounded apothecary's laugh."

"Come, come, Doctor, Sparks is a good fellow at heart;

I won't have him abused. I never knew he had been in the infantry; I should think it must have been another of the same name."

"Not at all; there's only one like him in the service, and that's himself. Confound it, man, I'd know his skin upon a bush; he was only three weeks in the Tenth, and, indeed, your humble servant has the whole merit of his leaving it so soon."

"Do let us hear how that happened."

"Simply thus: The jolly Tenth were some four years ago the pleasantest corps in the army; from the lieutenant-colonel down to the last joined sub., all were out-and-outers, — real gay fellows. The mess was, in fact, like a pleasant club, and if you did not suit it, the best thing you could do was to sell out or exchange into a slower regiment; and, indeed, this very wholesome truth was not very long in reaching your ears some way or other, and a man that could remain after being given this hint, was likely to go afterwards without one."

Just as Dr. Quill reached this part of his story, an orderly dragoon galloped furiously past, and the next moment an aide-de-camp rode by, calling as he passed us, —

"Close up, there! Close up! Get forward, my lads! get forward!"

It was evident, from the stir and bustle about, that some movement was being made; and soon after, a dropping, irregular fire from the rear showed that our cavalry were engaged with the enemy. The affair was scarcely of five minutes' duration, and our march resumed all its former regularity immediately after.

I now turned to the doctor to resume his story, but he was gone; at what moment he left I could not say, but O'Shaughnessy was also absent, nor did I again meet with them for a considerable time after.

Towards daybreak we halted at Bonares, when, my wound demanding rest and attention, I was billeted in the village, and consigned to all the miseries of a sick bed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JOURNEY.

WITH that disastrous day my campaigning was destined, for some time at least, to conclude. My wound, which grew from hour to hour more threatening, at length began to menace the loss of the arm, and by the recommendation of the regimental surgeons, I was ordered back to Lisbon.

Mike, by this time perfectly restored, prepared everything for my departure, and on the third day after the battle of the Coa, I began my journey with downcast spirits and depressed heart. The poor fellow was, however, a kind and affectionate nurse, and unlike many others, his cares were not limited to the mere bodily wants of his patient, — he sustained, as well as he was able, my drooping resolution, rallied my spirits, and cheered my courage. With the very little Portuguese he possessed, he contrived to make every imaginable species of bargain; always managed a good billet; kept every one in good humor, and rarely left his quarters in the morning without a most affective leave-taking, and reiterated promises to renew his visit.

Our journeys were usually short ones, and already two days had elapsed, when, towards nightfall, we entered the little hamlet of Jaffra. During the entire of that day, the pain of my wounded limb had been excruciating; the fatigue of the road and the heat had brought back violent inflammation, and when at last the little village came in sight, my reason was fast yielding to the torturing agonies of my wound. But the transports with which I greeted my resting-place were soon destined to a change; for as we drew near, not a light was to be seen, not a sound to be heard, not even a dog barked as the heavy mule-cart rattled over the uneven road. No trace of any living thing was there. The little hamlet lay sleeping in the pale moonlight, its streets deserted, and its homes tenantless; our own footsteps alone echoed along the dreary causeway. Here and there, as we advanced farther, we found some relics of broken furniture and house-gear; most of the doors lay open, but nothing remained within save bare walls; the embers still smoked in many places upon the hearth, and showed us that the flight of the inhabitants had been recent. Yet everything convinced us that the French had not been there; there was no trace of the reckless violence and wanton cruelty which marked their footsteps everywhere.

All proved that the desertion had been voluntary; perhaps in compliance with an order of our commander-in-chief, who frequently desired any intended line of march of the enemy to be left thus a desert. As we sauntered slowly on from street to street, half hoping that some one human being yet remained behind, and casting our eyes from side to side in search of quarters for the night, Mike suddenly came running up, saying, —

"I have it, sir; I 've found it out. There 's people living down that small street there; I saw a light this minute as I passed."

I turned immediately, and accompanied by the mule-driver, followed Mike across a little open square into a small and narrow street, at the end of which a light was seen faintly twinkling. We hurried on and in a few minutes reached a high wall of solid masonry, from a niche of which we now discovered, to our utter disappointment, the light proceeded. It was a small lamp placed before a little waxen image of the Virgin, and was probably the last act of piety of some poor villager ere he left his home and hearth forever. There it burned, brightly and tranquilly, throwing its mellow ray upon the cold, deserted stones.

Whatever impatience I might have given way to in a moment of chagrin was soon repressed, as I saw my two followers, uncovering their heads in silent reverence, kneel down before the little shrine. There was something at once touching and solemn in this simultaneous feeling of homage from the hearts of those removed in country, language, and in blood. They bent meekly down, their heads bowed upon their bosoms, while with muttering voices each offered up his prayer. All sense of their disappointment, all memory of their forlorn state, seemed to have yielded to more powerful and absorbing thoughts, as they opened their hearts in prayer.

My eyes were still fixed upon them when suddenly Mike, whose devotion seemed of the briefest, sprang to his legs, and with a spirit of levity but little in accordance with his late proceedings, commenced a series of kicking, rapping, and knocking at a small oak postern sufficient to have aroused a whole convent from their cells. "House there! Good people within!" — bang, bang, bang; but the echoes alone responded to his call, and the sounds died away at length in the distant streets, leaving all as silent and dreary as before.

Our Portuguese friend, who by this time had finished his orisons, now began a vigorous attack upon the small door, and with the assistance of Mike, armed with a fragment of granite about the size of a man's head, at length separated the frame from the hinges, and sent the whole mass prostrate before us.

The moon was just rising as we entered the little park, where gravelled walks, neatly kept and well-trimmed, bespoke recent care and attention; following a handsome alley of lime-trees, we reached a little *jet d'eau*, whose sparkling fountain shone diamond-like in the moonbeams, and escaping from the edge of a vast shell, ran murmuring amidst mossy stones and water-lilies that, however naturally they seemed thrown around, bespoke also the hand of taste in their position. On turning from the spot, we came directly in front of an old but handsome château, before which stretched a terrace of considerable extent. Its balustraded parapet lined with orange-trees, now in full blossom, scented the still air with delicious odor; marble statues peeped here and there amidst the foliage, while a rich acacia, loaded with flowers, covered the walls of the building, and hung in vast masses of variegated blossom across the tall windows.

As leaning on Mike's arm I slowly ascended the steps of the terrace, I was more than ever struck with the silence and death-like stillness around; except the gentle plash of the fountain, all was at rest; the very plants seemed to sleep in the yellow moonlight, and not a trace of any living thing was there.

The massive door lay open as we entered the spacious hall flagged with marble and surrounded with armorial bearings. We advanced farther and came to a broad and handsome stair, which led us to a long gallery, from which a suit of rooms opened, looking towards the front part of the building. Wherever we went, the furniture appeared perfectly untouched; nothing was removed; the very chairs were grouped around the windows and the tables; books, as if suddenly dropped from their readers' hands, were scattered upon the sofas and the ottomans; and in one small apartment, whose blue satin walls and damask drapery bespoke a boudoir, a rich mantilla of black velvet and a silk glove were thrown upon a chair. It was clear the desertion had been most recent, and everything indicated that no time had been given to the fugitives to prepare for flight. What a sad picture of war was there! To think of those whose home was endeared to them by all the refinements of cultivated life and all the associations of years of happiness sent out upon the wide world wanderers and houseless, while their hearth, sacred by every tie that binds us to our kindred, was to be desecrated by the ruthless and savage hands of a ruffian soldiery. I thought of them, — perhaps at that very hour their thoughts were clinging round the old walls, remembering each well-beloved spot, while they took their lonely path through mountain and through valley, — and felt ashamed and abashed at my own intrusion there. While thus my revery ran on, I had not perceived that Mike, whose views were very practical upon all occasions, had lighted a most cheerful fire upon the hearth, and disposing a large sofa before it, had carefully closed the curtains; and was, in fact, making himself and his master as much at home as though he had spent his life there.

"Is n't it a beautiful place, Misther Charles? And this little room, does n't it remind you of the blue bed-room in O'Malley Castle, barrin' the elegant view out upon the Shannon, and the mountain of Scariff?"

Nothing short of Mike's patriotism could forgive such a comparison; but, however, I did not contradict him as he ran on: —

"Faith, I knew well there was luck in store for us this evening; and ye see the handful of prayers I threw away outside was n't lost. José 's making the beasts comfortable in the stable, and I 'm thinking we 'll none of us complain of our quarters. But you 're not eating your supper; and the beautiful hare-pie that I stole this morning, won't you taste it? Well, a glass of Malaga? Not a glass of Malaga? Oh, mother of Moses! what 's this for?"

Unfortunately, the fever produced by the long and toilsome journey had gained considerably on me, and except copious libations of cold water, I could touch nothing; my arm, too, was much more painful than before. Mike soon perceived that rest and quietness were most important to me at the moment, and having with difficulty been prevailed upon to swallow a few hurried mouthfuls, the poor fellow disposed cushions around me in every imaginable form for comfort; and then, placing my wounded limb in its easiest position, he extinguished the lamp, and sat silently down beside the hearth, without speaking another word.

Fatigue and exhaustion, more powerful than pain, soon produced their effects upon me, and I fell asleep; but it was no refreshing slumber which visited my heavy eyelids; the slow fever of suffering had been hour by hour increasing, and my dreams presented nothing but scenes of agony and torture. Now I thought that, unhorsed and wounded, I was trampled beneath the clanging hoofs of charging cavalry; now I felt the sharp steel piercing my flesh, and heard the loud cry of a victorious enemy; then, methought, I was stretched upon a litter, covered by gore and mangled by a grape-shot. I thought I saw my brother officers approach and look sadly upon me, while one, whose face I could not remember, muttered: "I should not have known him." The dreadful hospital of Talavera, and all its scenes of agony, came up before me, and I thought that I lay waiting my turn for amputation. This last impression, more horrible to me than all the rest, made me spring from my couch, and I awoke. The cold drops of perspiration stood upon my brow, my mouth was parched and open, and my temples throbbed so that I could count their beatings; for some seconds I could not throw off the frightful illusion I labored under, and it was only by degrees I recovered consciousness and remembered where I was. Before me, and on one side of the bright wood-fire, sat Mike, who, apparently deep in thought, gazed fixedly at the blaze. The start I gave on awaking had not attracted his attention, and I could see, as the flickering glare fell upon his features, that he was pale and ghastly, while his eyes were riveted upon the fire; his lips moved rapidly, as if in prayer, and his locked hands were pressed firmly upon his bosom; his voice, at first inaudible, I could gradually distinguish, and at length heard the following muttered sentences: —

"Oh, mother of mercy! So far from his home and his people, and so young to die in a strange land — There it is again." Here he appeared listening to some sounds from without. "Oh, wirra, wirra, I know it well! — the winding-sheet, the winding-sheet! There it is; my own eyes saw it!" The tears coursed fast upon his pale cheeks, and his voice grew almost inaudible, as rocking to and fro, for some time he seemed in a very stupor of grief; when at last, in a faint, subdued tone, he broke into one of those sad and plaintive airs of his country, which only need the moment of depression to make them wring the very heart in agony.

His song was that to which Moore has appended the beautiful lines, "Come rest on this bosom." The following imperfect translation may serve to convey some impression of the words, which in Mike's version were Irish: —

"The day was declining,
The dark night drew near,
And the old lord grew sadder
And paler with fear:
'Come listen, my daughter,
Come nearer, oh, near!
Is 't the wind or the water
That sighs in my ear?'

"Not the wind nor the water
Now stirred the night air,
But a warning far sadder, —
The Banshee was there!

Now rising, now swelling,
On the night wind it bore
One cadence, still telling,
'I want thee, Rossmore!'

"And then fast came his breath,
And more fixed grew his eye;
And the shadow of death
Told his hour was nigh.
Ere the dawn of that morning
The struggle was o'er,
For when thrice came the warning
A corpse was Rossmore!"

The plaintive air to which these words were sung fell heavily upon my heart, and it needed but the low and nervous condition I was in to make me feel their application to myself. But so it is; the very superstition your reason rejects and your sense spurns, has, from old association, from habit, and from mere nationality too, a hold upon your hopes and fears that demands more firmness and courage than a sick-bed possesses to combat with success; and I now listened with an eager ear to mark if the Banshee cried, rather than sought to fortify myself by any recurrence to my own convictions. Meanwhile Mike's attitude became one of listening attention. Not a finger moved; he scarce seemed even to breathe; the state of suspense I suffered from was maddening; and at last, unable to bear it longer, I was about to speak, when suddenly, from the floor beneath us, one long-sustained note swelled upon the air and died away again, and immediately after, to the cheerful sounds of a guitar, we heard the husky voice of our Portuguese guide indulging himself in a love-ditty.

Ashamed of myself for my fears, I kept silent; but Mike, who felt only one sensation, — that of unmixed satisfaction at his mistake, — rubbed his hands pleasantly, filled up his glass, drank it, and refilled; while with an accent of reassured courage, he briefly remarked, —

"Well, Mr. José, if that be singing, upon my conscience I wonder what crying is like!"

I could not forbear a laugh at the criticism; and in a moment, the poor fellow, who up to that moment believed me sleeping, was beside me. I saw from his manner that he dreaded lest I had been listening to his melancholy song, and had overheard any of his gloomy forebodings; and as he cheered my spirits and spoke encouragingly, I could remark that he made more than usual endeavors to appear light-hearted and at ease. Determined, however, not to let him escape so easily, I questioned him about his belief in ghosts and spirits, at which he endeavored, as he ever did when the subject was an unpleasing one, to avoid the discussion; but rather perceiving that I indulged in no irreverent disrespect of these matters, he grew gradually more open, treating the affair with that strange mixture of credulity and mockery which formed his estimate of most things, — now seeming to suppose that any palpable rejection of them might entail sad consequences in future, now half ashamed to go the whole length in his credulity.

"And so, Mike, you never saw a ghost yourself? — that you acknowledge?"

"No, sir, I never saw a real ghost; but sure there 's many a thing I never saw; but Mrs. Moore, the housekeeper, seen two. And your grandfather that 's gone — the Lord be good to him! — used to walk once a year in Lurra Abbey; and sure you know the story about Tim Clinchy that was seen every Saturday night coming out of the cellar with a candle and a mug of wine and a pipe in his mouth, till Mr. Barry laid him. It cost his honor your uncle ten pounds in Masses to make him easy; not to speak of a new lock and two bolts on the cellar door."

"I have heard all about that; but as you never yourself saw any of these things — "

"But sure my father did, and that 's the same any day. My father seen the greatest ghost that ever was seen in the county Cork, and spent the evening with him, that 's more."

"Spent the evening with him! — what do you mean?"

"Just that, devil a more nor less. If your honor was n't so weak, and the story was n't a trying one, I 'd like to tell it to you."

"Out with it by all means, Mike; I am not disposed to sleep; and now that we are upon these matters, my curiosity is strongly excited by your worthy father's experience."

Thus encouraged, having trimmed the fire and reseated himself beside the blaze, Mike began; but as a ghost is no every-day personage in our history, I must give him a chapter to himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GHOST.

"Well, I believe your honor heard me tell long ago how my father left the army, and the way that he took to another line of life that was more to his liking. And so it was, he was happy as the day was long; he drove a hearse for Mr. Callaghan of Cork for many years, and a pleasant place it was; for ye see, my father was a 'cute man, and knew something of the world; and though he was a droll devil, and could sing a funny song when he was among the boys, no sooner had he the big black cloak on him and the weepers, and he seated on the high box with the six long-tailed blacks before him, you'd really think it was his own mother was inside, he looked so melancholy and miserable. The sexton and gravedigger was nothing to my father; and he had a look about his eye — to be sure there was a reason for it — that you'd think he was up all night crying; though it's little indulgence he took that way.

"Well, of all Mr. Callaghan's men, there was none so great a favorite as my father. The neighbors were all fond of him.

"'A kind crayture, every inch of him!' the women would say. 'Did ye see his face at Mrs. Delany's funeral?'

"'True for you,' another would remark; 'he mistook the road with grief, and stopped at a shebeen house instead of Kilmurry church.'

"I need say no more, only one thing, — that it was principally among the farmers and the country people my father was liked so much. The great people and the quality — I ax your pardon; but sure is n't it true, Mister Charles? — they don't fret so much after their fathers and brothers, and they care little who's driving them, whether it was a decent, respectable man like my father, or a chap with a grin on him like a rat-trap. And so it happened that my father used to travel half the county; going here and there wherever there was trade stirring; and faix, a man did n't think himself rightly buried if my father was n't there; for ye see, he knew all about it: he could tell to a quart of spirits what would be wanting for a wake; he knew all the good criers for miles round; and I 've heard it was a beautiful sight to see him standing on a hill, arranging the procession as they walked into the churchyard, and giving the word like a captain, —

"'Come on, the stiff; now the friends of the stiff; now the pop'lace.'

"That 's what he used to say, and troth he was always repeating it, when he was a little gone in drink, — for that 's the time his spirits would rise, and he 'd think he was burying half Munster.

"And sure it was a real pleasure and a pride to be buried in them times; for av it was only a small farmer with a potato garden, my father would come down with the black cloak on him, and three yards of crape behind his hat, and set all the children crying and yelling for half a mile round; and then the way he 'd walk before them with a spade on his shoulder, and sticking it down in the ground, clap his hat on the top of it, to make it look like a chief mourner. It was a beautiful sight!"

"But Mike, if you indulge much longer in this flattering recollection of your father, I 'm afraid we shall lose sight of the ghost entirely."

"No fear in life, your honor; I 'm coming to him now. Well, it was this way it happened: In the winter of the great frost, about forty-two or forty-three years ago, the ould priest of Tulloughmurray took ill and died. He was sixty years priest of the parish, and mightily beloved by all the people, and good reason for it; a pleasanter man, and a more social crayture never lived, — 't was himself was the life of the whole country-side. A wedding nor a christening was n't lucky av he was n't there, sitting at the top of the table, with may be his arm round the bride herself, or the baby on his lap, a smoking jug of punch before him, and as much kindness in his eye as would make the fortunes of twenty hypocrites if they had it among them. And then he was so good to the poor; the Priory was always so full of ould men and ould women sitting around the big fire in the kitchen that the cook could hardly get near it. There they were, eating their meals and burning their shins till they were speckled like a trout's back, and grumbling all the time; but Father Dwyer liked them, and he would have them.

"'Where have they to go,' he'd say, 'av it wasn't to me? Give Molly Kinshela a lock of that bacon. Tim, it's a could morning; will ye have a taste of the "dew?"'

"Ah, that's the way he'd spake to them; but sure goodness is no warrant for living, any more than devilment, and so he got could in his feet at a station, and he rode home in the heavy snow without his big coat, — for he gave it away to a blind man on the road; in three days he was dead.

"I see you're getting impatient, so I'll not stop to say what grief was in the parish when it was known; but troth, there never was seen the like before, — not a crayture would lift a spade for two days, and there was more whiskey sold in that time than at the whole spring fair. Well, on the third day the funeral set out, and never was the equal of it in them parts: first, there was my father, — he came special from Cork with the six horses all in new black, and plumes like little poplar-trees, — then came Father Dwyer, followed by the two coadjutors in beautiful surplices, walking bare-headed, with the little boys of the Priory school, two-and-two."

"Well, Mike, I'm sure it was very fine; but for Heaven's sake, spare me all these descriptions, and get on to the ghost!"

"'Faith, yer honor's in a great hurry for the ghost, — may be ye won't like him when ye have him; but I'll go faster, if ye please. Well, Father Dwyer, ye see, was born at Aghan-lish, of an ould family, and he left it in his will that he was to be buried in the family vault; and as Aghan-lish was eighteen miles up the mountains, it was getting late when they drew near. By that time the great procession was all broke up and gone home. The coadjutors stopped to dine at the 'Blue Bellows' at the cross-roads; the little boys took to pelting snowballs; there was a fight or two on the way besides, — and in fact, except an ould deaf fellow that my father took to mind the horses, he was quite alone. Not that he minded that same; for when the crowd was gone, my father began to sing a droll song, and told the deaf chap that it was a lamentation. At last they came in sight of Aghan-lish. It was a lonesome, melancholy-looking place with nothing near it except two or three ould fir-trees and a small slated house with one window, where the sexton lived, and even that was shut up and a padlock on the door. Well, my father was not over much pleased at the look of matters; but as he was never hard put to what to do, he managed to get the coffin into the vestry, and then when he had unharnessed the horses, he sent the deaf fellow with them down to the village to tell the priest that the corpse was there, and to come up early in the morning and perform Mass. The next thing to do was to make himself comfortable for the night; and then he made a roaring fire on the ould hearth, — for there was plenty of bog-fir there, — closed the windows with the black cloaks, and wrapping two round himself, he sat down to cook a little supper he brought with him in case of need.

"Well, you may think it was melancholy enough to pass the night up there alone with a corpse, in an ould ruined church in the middle of the mountains, the wind howling about on every side, and the snowdrift beating against the walls; but as the fire burned brightly, and the little plate of rashers and eggs smoked temptingly before him, my father mixed a jug of the strongest punch, and sat down as happy as a king. As long as he was eating away he had no time to be thinking of anything else; but when all was done, and he looked about him, he began to feel very low and melancholy in his heart. There was the great black coffin on three chairs in one corner; and then the mourning cloaks that he had stuck up against the windows moved backward and forward like living things; and outside, the wild cry of the plover as he flew past, and the night-owl sitting in a nook of the old church. 'I wish it was morning, anyhow,' said my father, 'for this is a lonesome place to be in; and faix, he 'll be a cunning fellow that catches me passing the night this way again.' Now there was one thing distressed him most of all, — my father used always to make fun of the ghosts and sperits the neighbors would tell of, pretending there was no such thing; and now the thought came to him, 'May be they 'll revenge themselves on me to-night when they have me up here alone;' and with that he made another jug stronger than the first, and tried to remember a few prayers in case of need, but somehow his mind was not too clear, and he said afterwards he was always mixing up ould songs and toasts with the prayers, and when he thought he had just got hold of a beautiful psalm, it would turn out to be 'Tatter Jack Walsh' or 'Limping James' or something like that. The storm, meanwhile, was rising every moment, and parts of the old abbey were falling as the wind shook the ruin; and my father's spirits, notwithstanding the punch, were lower than ever.

"'I made it too weak,' said he, as he set to work on a new jorum; and troth, this time that was not the fault of it, for the first sup nearly choked him.

"'Ah,' said he, now, 'I knew what it was; this is like the thing; and Mr. Free, you are beginning to feel easy and comfortable. Pass the jar. Your very good health and song. I 'm a little hoarse, it 's true, but if the company will excuse —'

"And then he began knocking on the table with his knuckles, as if there was a room full of people asking him to sing. In short, my father was drunk as a fiddler; the last brew finished him; and he began roaring away all kinds of droll songs, and telling all manner of stories as if he was at a great party.

"While he was capering this way about the room, he knocked down his hat, and with it a pack of cards he put into it before leaving home, for he was mighty fond of a game.

"'Will ye take a hand, Mr. Free?' said he, as he gathered them up and sat down beside the fire.

"'I 'm convanient,' said he, and began dealing out as if there was a partner fornenst him.

"When my father used to get this far in the story, he became very confused. He says that once or twice he mistook the liquor, and took a pull at the bottle of poteen instead of the punch; and the last thing he remembers was asking poor Father Dwyer if he would draw near to the fire, and not be lying there near the door.

"With that he slipped down on the ground and fell fast asleep. How long he lay that way he could never tell. When he awoke and looked up, his hair nearly stood on an end with fright. What do you think he seen fornenst him, sitting at the other side of the fire, but Father Dwyer himself. There he was, divil a lie in it, wrapped up in one of the mourning cloaks, trying to warm his hands at the fire.

"'*Salve hoc nomine patri!*' said my father, crossing himself; 'av it 's your ghost, God presarve me!'

"'Good-evening t' ye, Mr. Free,' said the ghost; 'and av I might be bould, what 's in the jug?' — for ye see, my father had it under his arm fast, and never let it go when he was asleep.

"'*Pater noster qui es in*, — poteen, sir,' said my father; for the ghost did n't look pleased at his talking Latin.

"'Ye might have the politeness to ax if one had a mouth on him, then,' says the ghost.

"'Sure, I did n't think the likes of you would taste sperits.'

"'Try me,' said the ghost; and with that he filled out a glass, and tossed it off like a Christian.

"'Beamish!' says the ghost, smacking his lips.

"'The same,' says my father; 'and sure what 's happened you has not spoiled your taste.'

"'If you 'd mix a little hot,' says the ghost, 'I 'm thinking it would be better, — the night is mighty sevare.'

"'Anything that your reverance pleases,' says my father, as he began to blow up a good fire to boil the water.

"'And what news is stirring?' says the ghost.

"'Devil a word, your reverance, — your own funeral was the only thing doing last week. Times is bad; except the measles, there 's nothing in our parts.'

"'And we 're quite dead hereabouts, too,' says the ghost.

"'There's some of us so, anyhow,' says my father, with a sly look. 'Taste that, your reverance.'

"'Pleasant and refreshing,' says the ghost; 'and now, Mr. Free, what do you say to a little "spoilt five," or "beggar my neighbor"?'

"'What will we play for?' says my father, for a thought just struck him, — 'may be it's some trick of the Devil to catch my soul.'

"'A pint of Beamish,' says the ghost.

"'Done!' says my father; 'cut for deal. The ace of clubs, — you have it.'

"Now the whole time the ghost was dealing the cards, my father never took his eyes off of him, for he was n't quite aisy in his mind at all; but when he saw him turn up the trump, and take a strong drink afterwards, he got more at ease, and began the game.

"How long they played it was never rightly known; but one thing is sure, they drank a cruel deal of sperits. Three quart bottles my father brought with him were all finished, and by that time his brain was so confused with the liquor, and all he lost, — for somehow he never won a game, — that he was getting very quarrelsome.

"'You have your own luck to it,' says he, at last.

"'True for you; and besides, we play a great deal where I come from.'

"'I've heard so,' says my father. 'I lead the knave, sir; spades! Bad cess to it, lost again!'

"Now it was really very distressing; for by this time, though they only began for a pint of Beamish, my father went on betting till he lost the hearse and all the six horses, mourning cloaks, plumes, and everything.

"'Are you tired, Mr. Free? May be you'd like to stop?'

"'Stop! faith it's a nice time to stop; of course not.'

"'Well, what will ye play for now?'

"The way he said these woods brought a trembling all over my father, and his blood curdled in his heart. 'Oh, murther!' says he to himself, 'it's my sowl he's wanting all the time.'

"'I've mighty little left,' says my father, looking at him keenly, while he kept shuffling the cards quick as lightning.

"'Mighty little; no matter, we 'll give you plenty of time to pay, — and if you can't do it, it shall never trouble you as long as you live.'

"'Oh, you murthering devil!' says my father, flying at him with a spade that he had behind his chair, 'I 've found you out.'

"With one blow he knocked him down, and now a terrible fight begun, for the ghost was very strong, too; but my father's blood was up, and he 'd have faced the Devil himself then. They rolled over each other several times, the broken bottles cutting them to pieces, and the chairs and tables crashing under them. At last the ghost took the bottle that lay on the hearth, and levelled my father to the ground with one blow. Down he fell, and the bottle and the whiskey were both dashed into the fire. That was the end of it, for the ghost disappeared that moment in a blue flame that nearly set fire to my father as he lay on the floor.

"Och, it was a cruel sight to see him next morning, with his cheek cut open and his hands all bloody, lying there by himself, — all the broken glass and the cards all round him, — the coffin, too, was knocked down off the chair, may be the ghost had trouble getting into it. However that was, the funeral was put off for a day, for my father could n't speak; and as for the sexton, it was a queer thing, but when they came to call him in the morning, he had two black eyes, and a gash over his ear, and he never knew how he got them. It was easy enough to know the ghost did it; but my father kept the secret, and never told it to any man, woman, or child in them parts."

CHAPTER IX.

LISBON.

I HAVE little power to trace the events which occupied the succeeding three weeks of my history. The lingering fever which attended my wound detained me during that time at the château; and when at last I did leave for Lisbon, the winter was already beginning, and it was upon a cold raw evening that I once more took possession of my old quarters at the Quay de Soderi.

My eagerness and anxiety to learn something of the campaign was ever uppermost, and no sooner had I reached my destination than I despatched Mike to the quartermaster's office to pick up some news, and hear which of my friends and brother officers were then at Lisbon. I was sitting in a state of nervous impatience watching for his return, when at length I heard footsteps approaching my room, and the next moment Mike's voice, saying, "The ould room, sir, where he was before." The door suddenly opened, and my friend Power stood before me.

"Charley, my boy!" — "Fred, my fine fellow!" was all either could say for some minutes. Upon my part, the recollection of his bold and manly bearing in my behalf choked all utterance; while upon his, my haggard cheek and worn look produced an effect so sudden and unexpected that he became speechless.

In a few minutes, however, we both rallied, and opened our store of mutual remembrances since we parted. My career I found he was perfectly acquainted with, and his consisted of nothing but one unceasing round of gayety and pleasure. Lisbon had been delightful during the summer, — parties to Cintra, excursions through the surrounding country, were of daily occurrence; and as my friend was a favorite everywhere, his life was one of continued amusement.

"Do you know, Charley, had it been any other man than yourself, I should not have spared him; for I have fallen head over ears in love with your little dark-eyed Portuguese."

"Ah, Donna Inez, you mean?"

"Yes, it is she I mean, and you need not affect such an air of uncommon *nonchalance*. She 's the loveliest girl in Lisbon, and with fortune to pay off all the mortgages in Connemara."

"Oh, faith! I admire her amazingly; but as I never flattered myself upon any preference —"

"Come, come, Charley, no concealment, my old fellow; every one knows the thing 's settled. Your old friend, Sir George Dashwood, told me yesterday."

"Yesterday! Why, is he here, at Lisbon?"

"To be sure he is; did n't I tell you that before? Confound it, what a head I have! Why, man, he 's come out as deputy adjutant-general; but for him I should not have got renewed leave."

"And Miss Dashwood, is she here?"

"Yes, she came with him. By Jove, how handsome she is, — quite a different style of thing from our dark friend, but, to my thinking, even handsomer. Hammersley seems of my opinion, too."

"How! Is Hammersley at Lisbon?"

"On the staff here. But, confound it, what makes you so red, you have no ill-feeling towards him now. I know he speaks most warmly of you; no later than last night, at Sir George's —"

What Power was about to add I know not, for I sprang from my chair with a sudden start, and walked to the window, to conceal my agitation from him.

"And so," said I, at length regaining my composure in some measure, "Sir George also spoke of my name in connection with the senhora?"

"To be sure he did. All Lisbon does. What can you mean? But I see, my dear boy; you know you are not of the strongest, and we 've been talking far too long. Come now, Charley, I 'll say good-night. I 'll be with you at breakfast to-morrow, and tell you all the gossip; meanwhile promise me to get quietly to bed, and so good-night."

Such was the conflicting state of feeling I suffered from that I made no effort to detain Power. I longed to be once more alone, to think, calmly if I could, over the position I stood in, and to resolve upon my plans for the future.

My love for Lucy Dashwood had been long rather a devotion than a hope. My earliest dawn of manly ambition was associated with the first hour I met her. She it was who first touched my boyish heart, and suggested a sense of chivalrous ardor within me; and even though lost to me forever, I could still regard her as the mainspring of my actions, and dwell upon my passion as the thing that hallowed every enterprise of my life.

In a word, my love, however little it might reach her heart, was everything to mine. It was the worship of the devotee to his protecting saint. It was the faith that made me rise above misfortune and mishap, and led me onward; and in this way I could have borne anything, everything, rather than the imputation of fickleness.

Lucy might not — nay, I felt she did not — love me. It was possible that some other was preferred before me; but to doubt my own affection, to suspect my own truth, was to destroy all the charm of my existence, and to extinguish within me forever the enthusiasm that made me a hero to my own heart.

It may seem but poor philosophy; but alas, how many of our happiest, how many of our brightest thoughts here are but delusions like this! The dayspring of youth gilds the tops of the distant mountains before us, and many a weary day through life, when clouds and storms are thickening around us, we live upon the mere memory of the past. Some fast-flitting prospect of a bright future, some passing glimpse of a sunlit valley, tinges all our after-years.

It is true that he will suffer fewer disappointments, he will incur fewer of the mishaps of the world, who indulges in no fancies such as these; but equally true is it that he will taste none of that exuberant happiness which is that man's portion who weaves out a story of his life, and who, in connecting the promise of early years with the performance of later, will seek to fulfil a fate and destiny.

Weaving such fancies, I fell sound asleep, nor woke before the stir and bustle of the great city aroused me. Power, I found, had been twice at my quarters that morning, but fearing to disturb me, had merely left a few lines to say that, as he should be engaged on service during the day, we could not meet before the evening. There were certain preliminaries requisite regarding my leave which demanded my appearing before a board of medical officers, and I immediately set about dressing; resolving that, as soon as they were completed, I should, if permitted, retire to one of the small cottages on the opposite bank of the Tagus, there to remain until my restored health allowed me to rejoin my regiment.

I dreaded meeting the Dashwoods. I anticipated with a heavy heart how effectually one passing interview would destroy all my day-dreams of happiness, and I preferred anything to the sad conviction of hopelessness such a meeting must lead to.

While I thus balanced with myself how to proceed, a gentle step came to the door, and as it opened slowly, a servant in a dark livery entered.

"Mr. O'Malley, sir?"

"Yes," said I, wondering to whom my arrival could be thus early known.

"Sir George Dashwood requests you will step over to him as soon as you go out," continued the man; "he is so engaged that he cannot leave home, but is most desirous to see you."

"It is not far from here?"

"No, sir; scarcely five minutes' walk."

"Well, then, if you will show me the way, I'll follow you."

I cast one passing glance at myself to see that all was right about my costume, and sallied forth.

In the middle of the Black Horse Square, at the door of a large, stone-fronted building, a group of military men were assembled, chatting and laughing away together,—some reading the lately-arrived English papers; others were lounging upon the stone parapet, carelessly puffing their cigars. None of the faces were known to me; so threading my way through the crowd, I reached the steps. Just as I did so, a half-muttered whisper met my ear: —

"Who did you say?"

"O'Malley, the young Irishman who behaved so gallantly at the Douro."

The blood rushed hotly to my cheek; my heart bounded with exultation; my step, infirm and tottering but a moment before, became fixed and steady, and I felt a thrill of proud enthusiasm playing through my veins. How little did the speaker of those few and random words know what courage he had given to a drooping heart, what renewed energy to a breaking spirit! The voice of praise, too, coming from those to whom we had thought ourselves unknown, has a magic about it that must be felt to be understood. So it happened that in a few seconds a revolution had taken place in all my thoughts and feelings, and I, who had left my quarters dispirited and depressed, now walked confidently and proudly forward.

"Mr. O'Malley, sir," said the servant to the officer in waiting, as we entered the antechamber.

"Ah, Mr. O'Malley," said the aide-de-camp, in his blandest accent, "I hope you 're better. Sir George is most anxious to see you; he is at present engaged with the staff —"

A bell rang at the moment, and cut short the sentence; he flew to the door of the inner room, and returning in an instant, said, —

"Will you follow me? This way, if you please."

The room was crowded with general officers and aides-de-camp, so that for a second or two I could not distinguish the parties; but no sooner was my name announced, than Sir George Dashwood, forcing his way through, rushed forward to meet me.

"O'Malley, my brave fellow, delighted to shake your hand again! How much grown you are, — twice the man I knew you; and the arm, too, is it getting on well?"

Scarcely giving me a moment to reply, and still holding my hand tightly in his grasp, he introduced me on every side.

"My young Irish friend, Sir Edward, the man of the Douro. My Lord, allow me to present Lieutenant O'Malley, of the Fourteenth."

"A very dashing thing, that of yours, sir, at Ciudad Rodrigo."

"A very senseless one, I fear, my Lord."

"No, no, I don't agree with you at all; even when no great results follow, the *morale* of an army benefits by acts of daring."

A running fire of kind and civil speeches poured in on me from all quarters, and amidst all that crowd of bronzed and war-worn veterans, I felt myself the lion of the moment. Crawfurd, it appeared, had spoken most handsomely of my name, and I was thus made known to many of those whose own reputations were then extending over Europe.

In this happy trance of excited pleasure I passed the morning. Amidst the military chit-chat of the day around me, treated as an equal by the greatest and the most distinguished, I heard all the confidential opinions upon the campaign and its leaders; and in that most entrancing of all flatteries, — the easy tone of companionship of our elders and betters, — forgot my griefs, and half believed I was destined for great things.

Fearing, at length, that I had prolonged my visit too far, I approached Sir George to take my leave, when, drawing my arm within his, he retired towards one of the windows.

"A word, O'Malley, before you go. I've arranged a little plan for you; mind, I shall insist upon obedience. They'll make some difficulty about your remaining here, so that I have appointed you one of our extra aides-de-camp. That will free you from all trouble, and I shall not be very exacting in my demands upon you. You must, however, commence your duties to-day, and as we dine at seven precisely, I shall expect you. I am aware of your wish to stay in Lisbon, my boy, and if all I hear be true, congratulate you sincerely; but more of this another time, and so good-by." So saying, he shook my hand once more, warmly; and without well feeling how or why, I found myself in the street.

The last few words Sir George had spoken threw a gloom over all my thoughts. I saw at once that the report Power had alluded to had gained currency at Lisbon. Sir George believed it; doubtless, Lucy, too; and forgetting in an instant all the emulative ardor that so lately stirred my heart, I took my path beside the river, and sauntered slowly along, lost in my reflections.

I had walked for above an hour before paying any attention to the path I followed. Mechanically, as it were, retreating from the noise and tumult of the city, I wandered towards the country. My thoughts fixed but upon one theme, I had neither ears nor eyes for aught around me; the great difficulty of my present position now appearing to me in this light, — my attachment to Lucy Dashwood, unrequited and unreturned as I felt it, did not permit of my rebutting any report which might have reached her concerning Donna Inez. I had no right, no claim to suppose her sufficiently interested about me to listen to such an explanation, had I even the opportunity to make it. One thing was thus clear to me, — all my hopes had ended in that quarter; and as this conclusion sank into my mind, a species of dogged resolution to brave my fortune crept upon me, which only waited the first moment of my meeting her to overthrow and destroy forever.

Meanwhile I walked on, — now rapidly, as some momentary rush of passionate excitement, now slowly, as some depressing and gloomy notion succeeded; when suddenly my path was arrested by a long file of bullock cars which blocked up the way. Some chance squabble had arisen among the drivers, and to avoid the crowd and collision, I turned into a gateway which opened beside me, and soon found myself in a lawn handsomely planted and adorned with flowering shrubs and ornamental trees.

In the half-dreamy state my musings had brought me to, I struggled to recollect why the aspect of the place did not seem altogether new. My thoughts were, however, far away, — now blending some memory of my distant home with scenes of battle and bloodshed, or resting upon my first interview with her whose chance word, carelessly and lightly spoken, had written the story of my life. From this revery I was rudely awakened by a rustling noise in the trees behind me, and before I could turn my head, the two fore-paws of a large stag-hound were planted upon my shoulders, while the open mouth and panting tongue were close beside my face. My day-dream was dispelled quick as lightning; it was Juan himself, the favorite dog of the senhora, who gave me this rude welcome, and who now, by a thousand wild gestures and bounding caresses, seemed to do the honors of his house. There was something so like home in these joyful greetings that I yielded myself at once his prisoner, and followed, or rather was accompanied by him towards the villa.

Of course, sooner or later, I should have called upon my kind friends; then why not now, when chance has already brought me so near? Besides, if I held to my resolution, which I meant to do, — of retiring to some quiet and sequestered cottage till my health was restored, — the opportunity might not readily present itself again. This line of argument perfectly satisfied my reason; while a strong feeling of something like curiosity piqued me to proceed, and before many minutes elapsed, I reached the house. The door, as usual, lay wide open; and the ample hall, furnished like a sitting-room, had its customary litter of books, music, and flowers scattered upon the tables. My friend Juan, however, suffered me not to linger here, but rushing furiously at a door before me, began a vigorous attack for admittance.

As I knew this to be the drawing-room, I opened the door and walked in, but no one was to be seen; a half-open book lay upon an ottoman, and a fan, which I recognized as an old acquaintance, was beside it, but the owner was absent.

I sat down, resolved to wait patiently for her coming, without any announcement of my being there. I was not sorry, indeed, to have some moments to collect my thoughts, and restore my erring faculties to something like order.

As I looked about the room, it seemed as if I had been there but yesterday. The folding-doors lay open to the garden, just as I had seen them last; and save that the flowers seemed fewer, and those which remained of a darker and more sombre tint, all seemed unchanged. There lay the guitar to whose thrilling chords my heart had bounded; there, the drawing over which I had bent in admiring pleasure, suggesting some tints of light or shadow, as the fairy fingers traced them; every chair was known to me, and I greeted them as things I cared for.

While thus I scanned each object around me, I was struck by a little china vase which, unlike its other brethren, contained a bouquet of dead and faded flowers; the blood rushed to my cheek; I started up; it was one I had myself presented to her the day before we parted. It was in that same vase I placed it; the very table, too, stood in the same position beside that narrow window. What a rush of thoughts came pouring on me! And oh! — shall I confess it? — how deeply did such a mute testimony of remembrance speak to my heart, at the moment that I felt myself unloved and uncared for by another! I walked hurriedly up and down, a maze of conflicting resolves combating in my mind, while one thought ever recurred: "Would that I had not come there!" and yet after all it may mean nothing; some piece of passing coquetry which she will be the very first to laugh at. I remembered how she spoke of poor Howard; what folly to take it otherwise! "Be it so, then," said I, half aloud; "and now for my part of the game;" and with this I took from my pocket the light-blue scarf she had given me the morning we parted, and throwing it over my shoulder, prepared to perform my part in what I had fully persuaded myself to be a comedy. The time, however, passed on, and she came not; a thousand high-flown Portuguese phrases had time to be conned over again and again by me, and I had abundant leisure to enact my coming part; but still the curtain did not rise. As the day was wearing, I resolved at last to write a few lines, expressive of my regret at not meeting her, and promising myself an early opportunity of paying my respects under more fortunate circumstances. I sat down accordingly, and drawing the paper towards me, began in a mixture of French and Portuguese, as it happened, to indite my billet.

"Senhora Inez —" no — "Ma chère Mademoiselle Inez —" confound it, that's too intimate; well, here goes:

"Monsieur O'Malley presente ses respects—" that will never do; and then, after twenty other abortive attempts, I began thoughtlessly sketching heads upon the paper, and scribbling with wonderful facility in fifty different ways: "Ma charmante amie—Ma plus chère Inez," etc., and in this most useful and profitable occupation did I pass another half-hour.

How long I should have persisted in such an employment it is difficult to say, had not an incident intervened which suddenly but most effectually put an end to it. As the circumstance is one which, however little striking in itself, had the greatest and most lasting influence upon my future career, I shall, perhaps, be excused in devoting another chapter to its recital.

CHAPTER X.

A PLEASANT PREDICAMENT.

As I sat vainly endeavoring to fix upon some suitable and appropriate epithet by which to commence my note, my back was turned towards the door of the garden; and so occupied was I in my meditations, that even had any one entered at the time, in all probability I should not have perceived it. At length, however, I was aroused from my study by a burst of laughter, whose girlish joyousness was not quite new to me. I knew it well; it was the senhora herself; and the next moment I heard her voice.

"I tell you, I'm quite certain I saw his face in the mirror as I passed. Oh, how delightful! and you'll be charmed with him; so, mind, you must not steal him from me; I shall never forgive you if you do; and look, only look! he has got the blue scarf I gave him when he marched to the Douro."

While I perceived that I was myself seen, I could see nothing of the speaker, and wishing to hear something further, appeared more than ever occupied in the writing before me.

What her companion replied I could not, however, catch, but only guess at its import by the senhora's answer.

"*Fi donc!* — I really am very fond of him; but, never fear, I shall be as stately as a queen. You shall see how meekly he will kiss my hand, and with what unbending reserve I'll receive him."

"Indeed!" thought I; "mayhap, I'll mar your plot a little; but let us listen."

Again her friend spoke, but too low to be heard.

"It is so provoking," continued Inez; "I never can remember names, and his was something too absurd; but never mind, I shall make him a grandee of Portugal. Well, but come along, I long to present him to you."

Here a gentle struggle seemed to ensue; for I heard the senhora coaxingly entreat her, while her companion steadily resisted.

"I know very well you think I shall be so silly, and perhaps wrong; eh, is it not so? but you are quite mistaken. You 'll be surprised at my cold and dignified manner. I shall draw myself proudly up, thus, and curtsying deeply, say, 'Monsieur, j'ai l' honneur de vous saluer.'"

A laugh twice as mirthful as before interrupted her account of herself, while I could hear the tones of her friend evidently in expostulation.

"Well, then, to be sure, you are provoking, but you really promise to follow me. Be it so; then give me that moss-rose. How you have fluttered me; now for it!"

So saying, I heard her foot upon the gravel, and the next instant upon the marble step of the door. There is something in expectation that sets the heart beating, and mine throbbed against my side. I waited, however, till she entered, before lifting my head, and then springing suddenly up, with one bound clasped her in my arms, and pressing my lips upon her roseate cheek, said, —

"*Mar charmante amie!*" To disengage herself from me, and to spring suddenly back was her first effort; to burst into an immoderate fit of laughing, her second; her cheek was, however, covered with a deep blush, and I already repented that my malice had gone so far.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle," said I, in affected innocence, "if I have so far forgotten myself as to assume a habit of my own country to a stranger."

A half-angry toss of the head was her only reply, and turning towards the garden, she called to her friend: —

"Come here, dearest, and instruct my ignorance upon your national customs; but first let me present to you, — I never know his name, — the Chevalier de —— What is it?"

The glass door opened as she spoke; a tall and graceful figure entered, and turning suddenly round, showed me the features of Lucy Dashwood. We both stood opposite each other, each mute with amazement. *My* feelings let me not attempt to convey; shame, for the first moment stronger than aught else, sent the blood rushing to my face and temples, and the next I was cold and pale as death. As for her, I cannot guess at what passed in her mind. She curtsied deeply to me, and with a half-smile of scarce recognition passed by me, and walked towards a window.

"*Comme vous êtes amiable!*" said the lively Portuguese, who comprehended little of this dumb show; "here have I been flattering myself what friends you 'd be the very moment you meet, and now you 'll not even look at each other."

What was to be done? The situation was every instant growing more and more embarrassing; nothing but downright effrontery could get through with it now; and never did a man's heart more fail him than did mine at this conjuncture. I made the effort, however, and stammered out certain unmeaning commonplaces. Inez replied, and I felt myself conversing with the headlong recklessness of one marching to a scaffold, a coward's fear at his heart, while he essayed to seem careless and indifferent.

Anxious to reach what I esteemed safe ground, I gladly adverted to the campaign; and at last, hurried on by the impulse to cover my embarrassment, was describing some skirmish with a French outpost. Without intending, I had succeeded in exciting the senhora's interest, and she listened with sparkling eye and parted lips to the description of a sweeping charge in which a square was broken, and several prisoners carried off. Warming with the eager avidity of her attention, I grew myself more excited, when just as my narrative reached its climax, Miss Dashwood walked gently towards the bell, rang it, and ordered her carriage. The tone of perfect *nonchalance* of the whole proceeding struck me dumb; I faltered, stammered, hesitated, and was silent. Donna Inez turned from one to the other of us with a look of unfeigned astonishment and I heard her mutter to herself something like a reflection upon "national eccentricities." Happily, however, her attention was now exclusively turned towards her friend, and while assisting her to shawl, and extorting innumerable promises of an early visit, I got a momentary reprieve; the carriage drew up also, and as the gravel flew right and left beneath the horses' feet, the very noise and bustle relieved me.

"*Adios*," then said Inez, as she kissed her for the last time, while she motioned to me to escort her to her carriage. I advanced, stopped, made another step forward, and again grew irresolute; but Miss Dashwood speedily terminated the difficulty; for making me a formal curtsey, she declined my scarce-proffered attention, and left the room.

As she did so, I perceived that on passing the table, her eyes fell upon the paper I had been scribbling over so long, and I thought that for an instant an expression of ineffable scorn seemed to pass across her features, save which — and perhaps even in this I was mistaken — her manner was perfectly calm, easy, and indifferent.

Scarce had the carriage rolled from the door, when the senhora, throwing herself upon her chair, clapped her hands in childish ecstasy, while she fell into a fit of laughing that I thought would never have an end. "Such a scene!" cried she; "I would not have lost it for the world; what cordiality! what *empressement* to form acquaintance! I shall never forget it, Monsieur le Chevalier; your national customs seem to run sadly in extremes. One would have thought you deadly enemies; and poor me, after a thousand delightful plans about you both!"

As she ran on thus, scarce able to control her mirth at each sentence, I walked the room with impatient strides, now, resolving to hasten after the carriage, stop it, explain in a few words how all had happened, and then fly from her forever; then the remembrance of her cold, impassive look crossed me, and I thought that one bold leap into the Tagus might be the shortest and easiest solution to all my miseries. Perfect abasement, thorough self-contempt had broken all my courage, and I could have cried like a child. What I said, or how I comforted myself after, I know not; but my first consciousness came to me as I felt myself running at the top of my speed far upon the road towards Lisbon.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DINNER.

It may easily be imagined that I had little inclination to keep my promise of dining that day with Sir George Dashwood. However, there was nothing else for it; the die was cast, — my prospects as regarded Lucy were ruined forever. We were not, we never could be anything to each other; and as for me, the sooner I braved my altered fortunes the better; and after all, why should I call them altered. She evidently never had cared for me; and even supposing that my fervent declaration of attachment had interested her, the apparent duplicity and falseness of my late conduct could only fall the more heavily upon me.

I endeavored to philosophize myself into calmness and indifference. One by one I exhausted every argument for my defence, which, however ingeniously put forward, brought no comfort to my own conscience. I pleaded the unerring devotion of my heart, the uprightness of my motives, and when called on for the proofs, — alas! except the blue scarf I wore in memory of another, and my absurd conduct at the villa, I had none. From the current gossip of Lisbon, down to my own disgraceful folly, all, all was against me.

Honesty of intention, rectitude of purpose, may be, doubtless they are, admirable supports to a rightly constituted mind; but even then they must come supported by such claims to probability as make the injured man feel he has not lost the sympathy of all his fellows. Now, I had none of these, had even my temperament, broken by sickness and harassed by unlucky conjectures, permitted my appreciating them.

I endeavored to call my wounded pride to my aid, and thought over the glance of haughty disdain she gave me as she passed on to her carriage; but even this turned against me, and a humiliating sense of my own degraded position sank deeply into my heart. "This impression at least," thought I, "must be effaced. I cannot permit her to believe — "

"His Excellency is waiting dinner, sir," said a lackey, introducing a finely powdered head gently within the door. I looked at my watch, it was eight o'clock; so snatching my sabre, and shocked at my delay, I hastily followed the servant down-stairs, and thus at once cut short my deliberations.

The man must be but little observant or deeply sunk in his own reveries, who, arriving half-an-hour too late for dinner, fails to detect in the faces of the assembled and expectant guests a very palpable expression of discontent and displeasure. It is truly a moment of awkwardness, and one in which few are found to manage with success; the blushing, hesitating, blundering apology of the absent man, is scarcely better than the ill-affected surprise of the more practised offender. The bashfulness of the one is as distasteful as the cool impertinence of the other; both are so thoroughly out of place, for we are thinking of neither; our thoughts are wandering to cold soups and rechauffféd pâtés, and we neither care for nor estimate the cause, but satisfy our spleen by cursing the offender.

Happily for me I was clad in a triple insensibility to such feelings, and with an air of most perfect unconstraint and composure walked into a drawing-room where about twenty persons were busily discussing what peculiar amiability in my character could compensate for my present conduct.

"At last, O'Malley, at last!" said Sir George. "Why, my dear boy, how very late you are!"

I muttered something about a long walk, — distance from Lisbon, etc.

"Ah! that was it. I was right, you see!" said an old lady in a spangled turban, as she whispered something to her friend beside her, who appeared excessively shocked at the information conveyed; while a fat, round-faced little general, after eying me steadily through his glass, expressed a *sotto voce* wish that I was upon *his* staff. I felt my cheek reddening at the moment, and stared around me like one whose trials were becoming downright insufferable, when happily dinner was announced, and terminated my embarrassment.

As the party filed past, I perceived that Miss Dashwood was not among them; and with a heart relieved for the moment by the circumstance, and inventing a hundred conjectures to account for it, I followed with the aides-de-camp and the staff to the dinner-room.

The temperament is very Irish, I believe, which renders a man so elastic that from the extreme of depression to the very climax of high spirits, there is but one spring. To this I myself plead guilty, and thus, scarcely was I freed from the embarrassment which a meeting with Lucy Dashwood must have caused, when my heart bounded with lightness.

When the ladies withdrew, the events of the campaign became the subject of conversation, and upon these, very much to my astonishment, I found myself consulted as an authority. The Douro, from some fortunate circumstance, had given me a reputation I never dreamed of, and I heard my opinions quoted upon topics of which my standing as an officer, and my rank in the service, could not imply a very extended observation. Power was absent on duty; and happily for my supremacy, the company consisted entirely of generals in the commissariat or new arrivals from England, all of whom knew still less than myself.

What will not iced champagne and flattery do? Singly, they are strong impulses; combined, their power is irresistible. I now heard for the first time that our great leader had been elevated to the peerage by the title of Lord Wellington, and I sincerely believe — however now I may smile at the confession — that, at the moment, I felt more elation at the circumstance than he did. The glorious sensation of being in any way, no matter how remotely, linked with the career of those whose path is a high one, and whose destinies are cast for great events, thrilled through me; and in all the warmth of my admiration and pride for our great captain, a secret pleasure stirred within me as I whispered to myself, "And I, too, am a soldier!"

I fear me that very little flattery is sufficient to turn the head of a young man of eighteen; and if I yielded to the "pleasant incense," let my apology be that I was not used to it; and lastly, let me avow, if I did get tipsy, I liked the liquor. And why not? It is the only tipple I know of that leaves no headache the next morning to punish you for the glories of the past night. It may, like all other strong potations, it is true, induce you to make a fool of yourself when under its influence; but like the nitrous-oxide gas, its effects are passing, and as the pleasure is an ecstasy for the time, and your constitution none the worse when it is over, I really see no harm in it.

Then the benefits are manifest; for while he who gives becomes never the poorer for his benevolence, the receiver is made rich indeed. It matters little that some dear, kind friend is ready with his bitter draught to remedy what he is pleased to call its unwholesome sweetness; you betake yourself with only the more pleasure to the "blessed elixir," whose fascinations neither the poverty of your pocket, nor the penury of your brain, can withstand, and by the magic of whose spell you are great and gifted. "*Vive la bagatelle!*" saith the Frenchman. "Long live flattery!" say I, come from what quarter it will, — the only wealth of the poor man, the only reward of the unknown one; the arm that supports us in failure; the hand that crowns us in success; the comforter in our affliction; the gay companion in our hours of pleasure; the lullaby of the infant; the staff of old age; the secret treasure we lock up in our own hearts, and which ever grows greater as we count it over. Let me not be told that the coin is fictitious, and the gold not genuine; its clink is as musical to the ear as though it bore the last impression of the mint, and I'm not the man to cast an aspersion upon its value.

This little digression, however seemingly out of place, may serve to illustrate what it might be difficult to convey in other words, — namely, that if Charles O'Malley became, in his own estimation, a very considerable personage that day at dinner, the fault lay not entirely with himself, but with his friends, who told him he was such. In fact, my good reader, I was the lion of the party, the man who saved

Laborde, who charged through a brigade of guns, who performed feats which newspapers quoted, though he never heard of them himself. At no time is a man so successful in society as when his reputation heralds him; and it needs but little conversational eloquence to talk well, if you have but a willing and ready auditory. Of mine, I could certainly not complain; and as, drinking deeply, I poured forth a whole tide of campaigning recital, I saw the old colonels of recruiting districts exchanging looks of wonder and admiration with officers of the ordnance; while Sir George himself, evidently pleased at my *début*, went back to an early period of our acquaintance, and related the rescue of his daughter in Galway.

In an instant the whole current of my thoughts was changed. My first meeting with Lucy, my boyhood's dream of ambition, my plighted faith, my thought of our last parting in Dublin, when, in a moment of excited madness, I told my tale of love. I remembered her downcast look, as her cheek now flushing, now growing pale, she trembled while I spoke. I thought of her, as in the crash of battle her image flashed across my brain, and made me feel a rush of chivalrous enthusiasm to win her heart by "doughty deeds."

I forgot all around and about me. My head reeled, the wine, the excitement, my long previous illness, all pressed upon me; and as my temples throbbed loudly and painfully, a chaotic rush of discordant, ill-connected ideas flitted across my mind. There seemed some stir and confusion in the room, but why or wherefore I could not think, nor could I recall my scattered senses, till Sir George Dashwood's voice roused me once again to consciousness.

"We are going to have some coffee, O'Malley. Miss Dashwood expects us in the drawing-room. You have not seen her yet?"

I know not my reply; but he continued: —

"She has some letters for you, I think."

I muttered something, and suffered him to pass on; no sooner had he done so, however, than I turned towards the door, and rushed into the street. The cold night air suddenly recalled me to myself, and I stood for a moment endeavoring to collect myself; as I did so, a servant stopped, and saluting me, presented me with a letter. For a second, a cold chill came over me; I knew not what fear beset me. The letter, I at last remembered, must be that one alluded to by Sir George, so I took it in silence, and walked on.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LETTER.

As I hurried to my quarters, I made a hundred guesses from whom the letter could have come; a kind of presentiment told me that it bore, in some measure, upon the present crisis of my life, and I burned with anxiety to read it.

No sooner had I reached the light, than all my hopes on this head vanished; the envelope bore the well-known name of my old college chum, Frank Webber, and none could, at the moment, have more completely dispelled all chance of interesting me. I threw it from me with disappointment, and sat moodily down to brood over my fate.

At length, however, and almost without knowing it, I drew the lamp towards me, and broke the seal. The reader being already acquainted with my amiable friend, there is the less indiscretion in communicating the contents, which ran thus: —

Trinity College, Dublin, No. 2,
October 5, 1810.

My dear O'Malley, — Nothing short of your death and burial, with or without military honors, can possibly excuse your very disgraceful neglect of your old friends here. Nesbitt has never heard of you, neither has Smith. Ottley swears never to have seen your handwriting, save on the back of a protested bill. You have totally forgotten *me*, and the dean informs me that you have never condescended a single line to him; which latter inquiry on my part nearly cost me a rustication.

A hundred conjectures to account for your silence — a new feature in you since you were here — are afloat. Some assert that your soldiering has turned your head, and that you are above corresponding with civilians. Your friends, however, who know you better and value your worth, think otherwise; and having seen a paragraph about a certain O'Malley being tried by court-martial for stealing a goose, and maltreating the woman that owned it, ascribe your not writing to other motives. Do, in any case, relieve our minds; say, is it yourself, or only a relative that 's mentioned?

Herbert came over from London with a long story about your doing wonderful things, — capturing cannon and general officers by scores, — but devil a word of it is extant; and if you have really committed these acts, they have "misused the king's press damnably," for neither in the "Times" nor the "Post" are you heard of. Answer this point, and say also if you have got promotion; for what precise sign you are algebraically expressed by at this writing, may serve Fitzgerald for a fellowship question. As for us, we are jogging along, *semper eadem*, — that is, worse and worse. Dear Cecil Cavendish, our gifted friend, slight of limb and soft of voice, has been rusticated for immersing four bricklayers in that green receptacle of stagnant water and duckweed, ycleped the "Haha." Roper, equally unlucky, has taken to reading for honors, and obtained a medal, I fancy, — at least his friends shy him, and it must be something of that kind. Belson — poor Belson (fortunately for him he was born in the nineteenth, not the sixteenth century, or he 'd be most likely ornamenting a pile of fagots) ventured upon some stray excursions into the Hebrew verbs, — the professor himself never having transgressed beyond the declensions, — and the consequence is, he is in disgrace among the seniors. And as for me, a heavy charge hangs over my devoted head even while I write. The senior lecturer, it appears, has been for some time instituting some very singular researches into the original state of our goodly college at its founding. Plans and specifications showing its extent and magnificence have been continually before the board for the last month; and in such repute have been a smashed door-sill or an old arch, that freshmen have now abandoned conic sections for crowbars, and instead of the "Principia" have taken up the pickaxe. You know, my dear fellow, with what enthusiasm I enter into any scheme for the aggrandizement of our Alma Mater, so I need not tell you how ardently I adventured into the career now opened to me. My time was completely devoted to the matter; neither means nor health did I spare, and in my search for antiquarian lore, I have actually undermined the old wall of the fellows' garden, and am each morning in expectation of hearing that the big bell near the commons-hall has descended from its lofty and most noisy eminence, and is snugly reposing in the mud. Meanwhile accident put me in possession of a most singular and remarkable discovery. Our chambers — I call them ours for old association sake — are, you may remember, in the Old Square. Well, I have been fortunate enough, within the very precincts of my own dwelling, to contribute a very wonderful fact to the history of the University; alone, unassisted, unaided, I labored at my discovery. Few can estimate the pleasure I felt, the fame and reputation I anticipated. I drew up a little memoir for the board, most respectfully and civilly worded, having for title the following: —

ACCOUNT

Of a remarkable Subterranean Passage lately discovered in the
Old Building of Trinity College, Dublin;
With Observations upon its Extent, Antiquity, and Probable Use.

By F. WEBBER, Senior Freshman.

My dear O'Malley, I 'll not dwell upon the pride I felt in my new character of antiquarian; it is enough to state, that my very remarkable tract was well considered and received, and a commission appointed to investigate the discovery, consisting of the vice-provost, the senior lecturer, old Woodhouse, the sub-dean, and a few more.

On Tuesday last they came accordingly in full academic costume. I, being habited most accurately in the like manner, conducted them with all form into my bed-room, where a large screen concealed from view the entrance to the tunnel alluded to. Assuming a very John Kembleish attitude, I struck this down with one hand, pointing with the other to the wall, as I exclaimed, "There! look there!"

I need only quote Barret's exclamation to enlighten you upon my discovery as, drawing in his breath with a strong effort, he burst out: —

"May the Devil admire me, but it 's a rat-hole!"

I fear, Charley, he 's right, and what 's more, that the board will think so, for this moment a very warm discussion is going on among that amiable and learned body whether I shall any longer remain an ornament to the University. In fact, the terror with which they fled from my chambers, overturning each other in the passage, seemed to imply that they thought me mad, and I do believe my voice, look, and attitude would not have disgraced a blue cotton dressing-gown and a cell in "Swift's." Be this as it may, few men have done more for college than I have. The sun never stood still for Joshua with more resolution than I have rested in my career of freshman; and if I have contributed little to the fame, I have done much for the funds of the University; and when they come to compute the various sums I have paid in, for fines, penalties, and what they call properly "impositions," if they don't place a portrait of me in the examination-hall, between Archbishop Ussher and Flood, then do I say there is no gratitude in mankind; not to mention the impulse I have given to the various artisans whose business it is to repair lamps, windows, chimneys, iron railings, and watchmen, all of which I have devoted myself to with an enthusiasm for political economy well known, and registered in the College Street police-office.

After all, Charley, I miss you greatly. Your second in a ballad is not to be replaced; besides, Carlisle Bridge has got low; medical students and young attorneys affect minstrelsy, and actually frequent the haunts sacred to our muse.

Dublin is, upon the whole, I think, worse; though one scarcely ever gets tired laughing at the small celebrities —

Master Frank gets here indiscreet, so I shall skip.

And so the Dashwoods are going too; this will make mine a pitiable condition, for I really did begin to feel tender in that quarter. You may have heard that she refused me; this, however, is not correct, though I have little doubt it might have been, - had I asked her.

Hammersley has, you know, got his dismissal. I wonder how the poor fellow took it when Power gave him back his letters and his picture. How *you* are to be treated remains to be seen; in any case, you certainly stand first favorite.

I laid down the letter at this passage, unable to read farther. Here, then, was the solution of the whole chaos of mystery; here the full explanation of what had puzzled my aching brain for many a night long. These were the very letters I had myself delivered into Hammersley's hands; this the picture he had trodden to dust beneath his heel the morning of our meeting. I now felt the reason of his taunting allusion to my "success," his cutting sarcasm, his intemperate passion. A flood of light poured at once across all the dark passages of my history; and Lucy, too, — dare I think of her! A rapid thought shot through my brain. What if she had really cared for me! What if for me she had rejected another's love! What if, trusting to my faith, my pledged and sworn faith, she had given me her heart! Oh, the bitter agony of that thought! To think that all my hopes were shipwrecked with the very land in sight.

I sprang to my feet with some sudden impulse, but as I did so the blood rushed madly to my face and temples, which beat violently; a parched and swollen feeling came about my throat; I endeavored to open my collar and undo my stock, but my disabled arm prevented me. I tried to call my servant, but my utterance was thick and my words would not come; a frightful suspicion crossed me that my reason was tottering. I made towards the door; but as I did so, the objects around me became confused and mingled, my limbs trembled, and I fell heavily upon the floor. A pang of dreadful pain shot through me as I fell; my arm was rebroken. After this I knew no more; all the accumulated excitement of the evening bore down with one fell swoop upon my brain. Ere day broke, I was delirious.

I have a vague and indistinct remembrance of hurried and anxious faces around my bed, of whispered words and sorrowful looks; but my own thoughts careered over the bold hills of the far west as I trod them in my boyhood, free and high of heart, or recurred to the din and crash of the battle-field, with the mad bounding of the war-horse, and the loud clang of the trumpet. Perhaps the acute pain of my swollen and suffering arm gave the character to my mental aberration; for I have more than once observed among the wounded in battle, that even when torn and mangled by grape from a howitzer, their ravings have partaken of a high feature of enthusiasm, — shouts of triumph and exclamations of pleasure, even songs have I heard, but never once the low muttering of despair or the half-stifled cry of sorrow and affliction.

Such were the few gleams of consciousness which visited me; and even to such as these I soon became insensible.

Few like to chronicle, fewer still to read, the sad history of a sick-bed. Of mine, I know but little. The throbbing pulses of the erring brain, the wild fancies of lunacy, take no note of time. There is no past nor future; a dreadful present, full of its hurried and confused impressions, is all that the mind beholds; and even when some gleams of returning reason flash upon the mad confusion of the brain, they come like sunbeams through a cloud, dimmed, darkened, and perverted.

It is the restless activity of the mind in fever that constitutes its most painful anguish; the fast-flitting thoughts that rush ever onwards, crowding sensation on sensation, an endless train of exciting images without purpose or repose;

or even worse, the straining effort to pursue some vague and shadowy conception which evades us ever as we follow, but which mingles with all around and about us, haunting us at midnight as in the noontime.

Of this nature was a vision which came constantly before me, till at length, by its very recurrence, it assumed a kind of real and palpable existence; and as I watched it, my heart thrilled with the high ardor of enthusiasm and delight, or sunk into the dark abyss of sorrow and despair. "The dawning of morning, the daylight sinking," brought no other image to my aching sight; and of this alone, of all the impressions of the period, has my mind retained any consciousness.

Methought I stood within an old and venerable cathedral, where the dim yellow light fell with a rich but solemn glow upon the fretted capitals, or the grotesque tracings of the oaken carvings, lighting up the fading gildings of the stately monuments, and tinting the varied hues of time-worn banners. The mellow notes of a deep organ filled the air, and seemed to attune the sense to all the awe and reverence of the place, where the very footfall, magnified by its many echoes, seemed half a profanation. I stood before an altar, beside me a young and lovely girl, whose bright brown tresses waved in loose masses upon a neck of snowy whiteness; her hand, cold and pale, rested within my own; we knelt together, not in prayer, but a feeling of deep reverence stole over my heart, as she repeated some few half-uttered words after me; I knew that she was mine. Oh, the ecstasy of that moment, as, springing to my feet, I darted forward to press her to my heart! When, suddenly, an arm was interposed between us, while a low but solemn voice rang in my ears, "Stir not; for thou art false and traitorous, thy vow a perjury, and thy heart a lie!" Slowly and silently the fair form of my loved Lucy — for it was her — receded from my sight. One look, one last look of sorrow — it was scarce reproach — fell upon me, and I sank back upon the cold pavement, broken-hearted and forsaken.

This dream came with daybreak, and with the calm repose of evening; the still hours of the waking night brought no other image to my eyes, and when its sad influence had spread a gloom and desolation over my wounded heart, a secret hope crept over me, that again the bright moment of happiness would return, and once more beside that ancient altar I'd kneel beside my bride, and call her mine.

For the rest, my memory retains but little; the kind looks which came around my bedside brought but a brief pleasure, for in their affectionate beaming I could read the gloomy prestige of my fate. The hurried but cautious step, the whispered sentences, the averted gaze of those who sorrowed for me, sunk far deeper into my heart than my friends then thought of. Little do they think, who minister to the sick or dying, how each passing word, each flitting glance is noted, and how the pale and stilly figure which lies all but lifeless before them counts over the hours he has to live by the smiles or tears around him!

Hours, days, weeks rolled over, and still my fate hung in the balance; and while in the wild enthusiasm of my erring faculties, I wandered far in spirit from my bed of suffering and pain, some well-remembered voice beside me would strike upon my ear, bringing me back, as if by magic, to all the realities of life, and investing my almost unconscious state with all the hopes and fears about me.

One by one, at length, these fancies fled from me, and to the delirium of fever succeeded the sad and helpless consciousness of illness, far, far more depressing; for as the conviction of sense came back, the sorrowful aspect of a dreary future came with it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VILLA.

The gentle twilight of an autumnal evening, calm, serene, and mellow, was falling as I opened my eyes to consciousness of life and being, and looked around me. I lay in a large and handsomely-furnished apartment, in which the hand of taste was as evident in all the decorations as the unsparing employment of wealth; the silk draperies of my bed, the inlaid tables, the ormolu ornaments which glittered upon the chimney, were one by one so many puzzles to my erring senses, and I opened and shut my eyes again and again, and essayed by every means in my power to ascertain if they were not the visionary creations of a fevered mind. I stretched out my hands to feel the objects; and even while holding the freshly-plucked flowers in my grasp I could scarce persuade myself that they were real. A thrill of pain at this instant recalled me to other thoughts, and I turned my eyes upon my wounded arm, which, swollen and stiffened, lay motionless beside me. Gradually, my memory came back, and to my weak faculties some passages of my former life were presented, not collectedly it is true, nor in any order, but scattered, isolated scenes. While such thoughts flew past, my ever-rising question to myself was, "Where am I now?" The vague feeling which illness leaves upon the mind, whispered to me of kind looks and soft voices; and I had a dreamy consciousness about me of being watched and cared for, but wherefore, or by whom, I knew not.

From a partly open door which led into a garden, a mild and balmy air fanned my temples and soothed my heated brow; and as the light curtain waved to and fro with the breeze, the odor of the rose and the orange-tree filled the apartment.

There is something in the feeling of weakness which succeeds to long illness of the most delicious and refined enjoyment. The spirit emerging as it were from the thraldom of its grosser prison, rises high and triumphant above the meaner thoughts and more petty ambitions of daily life. Purer feelings, more ennobling hopes succeed; and dreams of our childhood, mingling with our promises for the future, make up an ideal existence in which the low passions and cares of ordinary life enter not or are forgotten. 'T is then we learn to hold converse with ourselves; 't is then we ask how has our manhood performed the promises of its youth, or have our ripened prospects borne out the pledges of our boyhood? 'T is then, in the calm justice of our lonely hearts, we learn how our failures are but another name for our faults, and that what we looked on as the vicissitudes of fortune are but the fruits of our own vices. Alas, how short-lived are such intervals! Like the fitful sunshine in the wintry sky, they throw one bright and joyous tint over the dark landscape: for a moment the valley and the mountain-top are bathed in a ruddy glow; the leafless tree and the dark moss seem to feel a touch of spring; but the next instant it is past; the lowering clouds and dark shadows intervene, and the cold blast, the moaning wind, and the dreary waste are once more before us.

I endeavored to recall the latest events of my career, but in vain; the real and the visionary were inextricably mingled, and the scenes of my campaigns were blended with hopes and fears and doubts which had no existence save in my dreams. My curiosity to know where I was grew now my strongest feeling, and I raised myself with one arm to look around me. In the room all was still and silent, but nothing seemed to intimate what I sought for. As I looked, however, the wind blew back the curtain which half-concealed the sash-door, and disclosed to me the figure of a man seated at a table; his back was towards me, but his broad sombrero hat and brown mantle bespoke his nation; the light blue curl of smoke which wreathed gently upwards, and the ample display of long-necked, straw-wrapped flasks, also attested that he was enjoying himself with true Peninsular gusto, having probably partaken of a long siesta.

It was a perfect picture in its way of the indolent luxury of the South, — the rich and perfumed flowers, half-closing to the night air, but sighing forth a perfumed *buonas noches* as they betook themselves to rest; the slender shadows of the tall shrubs, stretching motionless across the walks; the very attitude of the figure himself was in keeping, as supported by easy chairs he lounged at full length, raising his head ever and anon as if to watch the wreath of eddying smoke as it rose upwards from his cigar and melted away in the distance.

"Yes," thought I, as I looked for some time, "such is the very type of his nation. Surrounded by every luxury of climate, blessed with all that earth can offer of its best and fairest, and yet only using such gifts as mere sensual gratifications." Starting with this theme, I wove a whole story for the unknown personage whom, in my wandering fancy, I began by creating a grandee of Portugal, invested with rank, honors, and riches; but who, effeminated by the habits and usages of his country, had become the mere idle voluptuary, living a life of easy and inglorious indolence. My further musings were interrupted at this moment, for the individual to whom I had been so complimentary in my revery, slowly arose from his recumbent position, flung his loose mantle carelessly across his left shoulder, and pushing open the sash-door, entered my chamber. Directing his steps to a large mirror, he stood for some minutes contemplating himself with what, from his attitude, I judged to be no small satisfaction. Though his back was still towards me, and the dim twilight of the room too uncertain to see much, yet I could perceive that he was evidently admiring himself in the glass. Of this fact I had soon the most complete proof; for as I looked, he slowly raised his broad-leafed Spanish hat with an air of most imposing pretension, and bowed reverently to himself.

"*Come sta vostra senoria?*" said he.

The whole gesture and style of this proceeding struck me as so ridiculous, that in spite of all my efforts I could scarcely repress a laugh. He turned quickly round and approached the bed. The deep shadow of the sombrero darkened the upper part of his features, but I could distinguish a pair of fierce-looking mustaches beneath, which curled upwards towards his eyes, while a stiff point beard stuck straight from his chin. Fearing lest my rude interruption had been overheard, I was framing some polite speech in Portuguese, when he opened the dialogue by asking in that language how I did.

I replied, and was about to ask some questions relative to where, and under whose protection I then was, when my grave-looking friend, giving a pirouette upon one leg, sent his hat flying into the air, and cried out in a voice that not even my memory could fail to recognize, —

"By the rock of Cashel he 's cured! — he 's cured! — the fever 's over! Oh, Master Charles, dear! oh, Master, darling, and you ain't mad, after all?"

"Mad! no, faith! but I shrewdly suspect you must be."

"Oh, devil a taste! But spake to me, honey; spake to me, acushla!"

"Where am I? Whose house is this? What do you mean by that disguise, that beard — "

"Whisht, I 'll tell you all, av you have patience? But are you cured? Tell me that first. Sure they was going to cut the arm off you, till you got out of bed, and with your pistols, sent them flying, one out of the window and the other down-stairs; and I bate the little chap with the saw myself till he could n't know himself in the glass."

While Mike ran on at this rate, I never took my eyes from him, and it was all my poor faculties were equal to, to convince myself that the whole scene was not some vision of a wandering intellect. Gradually, however, the well-known features recalled me to myself, and as my doubts gave way at length, I laughed long and heartily at the masquerade absurdity of his appearance.

Mike, meanwhile, whose face expressed no small mistrust at the sincerity of my mirth, having uncloaked himself, proceeded to lay aside his beard and mustaches, saying, as he did so, —

"There now, darling; there now, Master, dear, — don't be grinning that way, — I 'll not be a Portigee any more, av you 'll be quiet and listen to reason."

"But, Mike, where am I? Answer me that one question."

"You 're at home, dear; where else would you be?"

"At home?" said I, with a start, as my eye ranged over the various articles of luxury and elegance around, so unlike the more simple and unpretending features of my uncle's house, — "at home?"

"Ay, just so; sure, is n't it the same thing. It's ould Don Emanuel that owns it; and won't it be your own when you 're married to that lovely crayture herself?"

I started up, and placing my hand upon my throbbing temples, asked myself if I were really awake, or if some flight of fancy had not carried me away beyond the bounds of reason and sense. "Go on, go on!" said I, at length, in a hollow voice, anxious to gather from his words something like a clew to this mystery. "How did this happen?"

"Av ye mean how you came here, faith, it was just this way. After you got the fever, and beat the doctors, devil a one would go near you but myself and the major."

"The major, — Major Monsoon?"

"No, Major Power himself. Well, he told your friends up here how it was going very hard with you, and that you were like to die; and the same evening they sent down a beautiful litter, as like a hearse as two peas, for you, and brought you up here in state, — devil a thing was wanting but a few people to raise the cry to make it as fine a funeral as ever I seen. And sure, I set up a whillilew myself in the Black Horse Square, and the devils only laughed at me.

"Well, you see they put you into a beautiful, elegant bed, and the young lady herself sat down beside you, betune times fanning you with a big fan, and then drying her eyes, for she was weeping like a waterfall. 'Don Miguel,' says she to me, — for ye see, I put your cloak on by mistake when I was leaving the quarters, — 'Don Miguel, questa hidalgo é vostro amigo?'

"'My most particular friend,' says I; 'God spare him many years to be so.'

"'Then take up your quarters here,' says she, 'and don't leave him; we 'll do everything in our power to make you comfortable.'

"'I 'm not particular,' says I; 'the run of the house —'

"Then this is the Villa Nuova?" said I, with a faint sigh.

"The same," replied Mike; "and a sweet place it is for eating and drinking, — for wine in buckets full, av ye axed for it, for dancing and singing every evening, with as pretty craytures as ever I set eyes upon. Upon my conscience, it 's as good as Galway; and good manners it is they have. What 's more, none of your liberties or familiarities with strangers; but it 's Don Miguel, devil a less. 'Don Miguel, av it 's plazing to you to take a drop of Xeres before your meat?' or, 'Would you have a shaugh of a pipe or cigar when you 're done?' That 's the way of it."

"And Sir George Dashwood," said I, "has he been here? Has he inquired for me?"

"Every day either himself or one of the staff comes galloping up at luncheon time to ask after you; and then they have a bit of tender discourse with the senhora herself. Oh, devil a bit need ye fear them, she 's true blue; and it is n't the major's fault, — upon my conscience it is n't,

— for he does be coming the blarney over her in beautiful style."

"Does Miss Dashwood ever visit here?" said I, with a voice faltering and uncertain enough to have awakened suspicion in a more practised observer.

"Never once; and that 's what I call unnatural behavior, after you saving her life; and if she was n't — "

"Be silent, I say."

"Well, well, there, I won't say any more; and sure it 's time for me to be putting on my beard again. I 'm going to the Casino with Catrina, and sure it 's with real ladies I might be going av it was n't for Major Power, that told them I was n't a officer; but it 's all right again. I gave them a great history of the Frees from the time of Cuilla na Toole, that was one of the family and a cousin of Moses, I believe; and they behave well to one that comes from an ould stock."

"Don Miguel! Don Miguel!" said a voice from the garden.

"I 'm coming, my angel! I 'm coming, my turtle-dove!" said Mike, arranging his mustaches and beard with amazing dexterity. "Ah, but it would do your heart good av you could take a peep at us about twelve o'clock, dancing 'Dirty James' for a bolero, and just see Miss Catrina, the lady's maid, doing 'cover the buckle' as neat as Nature. There now, there 's the lemonade near your hand, and I 'll leave you the lamp, and you may go asleep as soon as you please, for Miss Inez won't come in to-night to play the guitar, for the doctor said it might do you harm now."

So saying, and before I could summon presence of mind to ask another question, Don Miguel wrapped himself in the broad folds of his Spanish cloak, and strode from the room with the air of an hidalgo.

I slept but little that night; the full tide of memory, rushing in upon me, brought back the hour of my return to Lisbon and the wreck of all my hopes, which from the narrative of my servant I now perceived to be complete. I dare not venture upon recording how many plans suggested themselves to my troubled spirit, and were in turn rejected. To meet Lucy Dashwood; to make a full and candid declaration; to acknowledge that flirtation alone with Donna Inez (a mere passing, boyish flirtation) had given the coloring to my innocent passion, and that in heart and soul I was hers, and hers only, — this was my first resolve; but alas! if I had not courage to sustain a common interview, to meet her in the careless crowd of a drawing-room, what could I do under circumstances like these? Besides, the matter would be cut very short by her coolly declaring that she had neither right nor inclination to listen to such a declaration. The recollection of her look as she passed me to her carriage came flashing across my brain and decided this point. No, no! I 'll not encounter that; however appearances for the moment had been against me, she should not have treated me thus coldly and disdainfully. It was quite clear she had never cared for me, — wounded pride had been her only feeling; and so as I reasoned I ended by satisfying myself that in that quarter all was at end forever.

Now then for dilemma number two, I thought. The senhora, my first impulse was one of anything but gratitude to her by whose kind, tender care my hours of pain and suffering had been soothed and alleviated. But for her, I should have been spared all my present embarrassment, all my shipwrecked fortunes; but for her I should now be the aide-de-camp residing in Sir George Dashwood's own house, meeting with Lucy every hour of the day, dining beside her, riding out with her, pressing my suit by every means and with every advantage of my position; but for her and her dark eyes — and, by-the-bye, what eyes they are! how full of brilliancy, yet how teeming with an expression of soft and melting sweetness; and her mouth, too, how perfectly chiselled those full lips, — how different from the cold, unbending firmness of Miss Dashwood's! Not but I have seen Lucy smile too, and what a sweet smile! How it lighted up her fair cheek, and made her blue eyes darken and deepen till they looked like heaven's own vault. Yes, there is more poetry in a blue eye. But still Inez is a very lovely girl, and her foot never was surpassed. She is a coquette, too, about that foot and ankle, — I rather like a woman to be so. What a sensation she would make in England; how she would be the rage! And then I thought of home and Galway, and the astonishment of some, the admiration of others, as I presented her as my wife, — the congratulations of my friends, the wonder of the men, the tempered envy of the women. Methought I saw my uncle, as he pressed her in his arms, say, "Yes, Charley, this is a prize worth campaigning for."

The stray sounds of a guitar which came from the garden broke in upon my musings at this moment. It seemed as if a finger was straying heedlessly across the strings. I started up, and to my surprise perceived it was Inez. Before I had time to collect myself, a gentle tap at the window aroused me; it opened softly, while from an unseen hand a bouquet of fresh flowers was thrown upon my bed. Before I could collect myself to speak, the sash closed again and I was alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VISIT.

Mike's performances at the masquerade had doubtless been of the most distinguished character, and demanded a compensating period of repose, for he did not make his appearance the entire morning. Towards noon, however, the door from the garden gently opened, and I heard a step upon the stone terrace, and something which sounded to my ears like the clank of a sabre. I lifted my head, and saw Fred Power beside me.

I shall spare my readers the recital of my friend, which, however, more full and explanatory of past events, contained in reality little more than Mickey Free had already told me. In fine, he informed me that our army, by a succession of retreating movements, had deserted the northern provinces, and now occupied the intrenched lines of Torres Vedras. That Massena, with a powerful force, was still in march, reinforcements daily pouring in upon him, and every expectation pointing to the probability that he would attempt to storm our position.

"The wise-heads," remarked Power, "talk of our speedy embarkation, the sanguine and the hot-brained rave of a great victory and the retreat of Massena; but I was up at headquarters last week with despatches, and saw Lord Wellington myself."

"Well, what did you make out? Did he drop any hint of his own views?"

"Faith, I can't say he did. He asked me some questions about the troops just landed; he spoke a little of the commissary department, damned the blankets, said that green forage was bad food for the artillery horses, sent me an English paper to read about the O. P. riots, and said the harriers would throw off about six o'clock, and that he hoped to see me at dinner."

I could not restrain a laugh at Power's catalogue of his lordship's topics. "So," said I, "he at least does not take any gloomy views of our present situation."

"Who can tell what he thinks? He 's ready to fight if fighting will do anything, and to retreat, if that be better. But that he 'll sleep an hour less, or drink a glass of claret more — come what will of it — I 'll believe from no man living.

"We 've lost one gallant thing in any case, Charley," resumed Power. "Busaco was, I 'm told, a glorious day, and our people were in the heat of it. So that, if we do leave the Peninsula now, that will be a confounded chagrin. Not for you, my poor fellow, for you could not stir; but I was so cursed foolish to take the staff appointment, — thus one folly ever entails another."

There was a tone of bitterness in which these words were uttered that left no doubt upon my mind some *arrière pensée* remained lurking behind them. My eyes met his; he bit his lip, and coloring deeply, rose from the chair, and walked towards the window.

The chance allusion of my man Mike flashed upon me at the moment, and I dared not trust myself to break silence. I now thought I could trace in my friend's manner less of that gay and careless buoyancy which ever marked him. There was a tone, it seemed, of more grave and sombre character, and even when he jested, the smile his features bore was not his usual frank and happy one, and speedily gave way to an expression I had never before remarked. Our silence which had now lasted for some minutes was becoming embarrassing; that strange consciousness that, to a certain extent, we were reading each other's thoughts, made us both cautious of breaking it; and when at length, turning abruptly round, he asked, "When I hoped to be up and about again?" I felt my heart relieved from I knew not well what load of doubt and difficulty that oppressed it. We chatted on for some little time longer, the news of Lisbon, and the daily gossip finishing our topics.

"Plenty of gayety, Charley, dinners and balls to no end! so get well, my boy, and make the most of it."

"Yes," I replied, "I 'll do my best; but be assured the first use I 'll make of health will be to join the regiment. I am heartily ashamed of myself for all I have lost already, — though not altogether my fault."

"And will you really join at once ?" said Power, with a look of eager anxiety I could not possibly account for.

"Of course I will; what have I, what can I have to detain me here ?"

What reply he was about to make at this moment I know not, but the door opened, and Mike announced Sir George Dashwood.

"Gently, my worthy man, not so loud, if you please ?" said the mild voice of the general, as he stepped noiselessly across the room, evidently shocked at the indiscreet tone of my follower. "Ah, Power, you here! and our poor friend, how is he ?"

"Able to answer for himself at last, Sir George," said I, grasping his proffered hand.

"My poor lad! you 've had a long bout of it; but you 've saved your arm, and that 's well worth the lost time. Well, I 've come to bring you good news; there 's been a very sharp cavalry affair, and our fellows have been the conquerors."

"There again, Power, — listen to that! We are losing everything!"

"Not so, not so, my boy," said Sir George, smiling blandly, but archly. "There are conquests to be won here, as well as there; and in your present state, I rather think you better fitted for such as these."

Power's brow grew clouded; he essayed a smile, but it failed, and he rose and hurried towards the window.

As for me, my confusion must have led to a very erroneous impression of my real feelings, and I perceived Sir George anxious to turn the channel of the conversation.

"You see but little of your host, O'Malley," he resumed; "he is ever from home; but I believe nothing could be kinder than his arrangements for you. You are aware that he kidnapped you from us? I had sent Forbes over to bring you to us; your room was prepared, everything in readiness, when he met your man Mike, setting forth upon a mule, who told him you had just taken your departure for the villa. We both had our claim upon you and, I believe, pretty much on the same score. By-the-bye, you have not seen Lucy since your arrival. I never knew it till yesterday, when I asked if she did not find you altered."

I blundered out some absurd reply, blushed, corrected myself, and got confused. Sir George attributing this, doubtless, to my weak state, rose soon after, and taking Power along with him, remarked as he left the room, —

"We are too much for him yet, I see that; so we 'll leave him quiet some time longer."

Thanking him in my heart for his true appreciation of my state, I sank back upon my pillow to think over all I had heard and seen.

"Well, Mister Charles," said Mike as he came forward with a smile, "I suppose you heard the news? The Fourteenth bate the French down at Merca there, and took seventy prisoners; but sure it's little good it 'll do, after all."

"And why not, Mike?"

"Musha! is n't Boney coming himself? He 's bringing all the Roossians down with him, and going to destroy us entirely."

"Not at all, man; you mistake. He 's nothing to do with Russia, and has quite enough on his hands at this moment."

"God grant it was truth you were talking! But, you see, I read it myself in the papers (or Sergeant Haggarty did, which is the same thing) that he 's coming with the Cusacks."

"With who? — with what?"

"With the Cusacks."

"What the devil do you mean? Who are they?"

"Oh, Tower of Ivory! did you never hear of the Cusacks, with the red beards and the red breeches and long poles with pike-heads on them, that does all the devilment on horseback, — spiking and spitting the people like larks?"

"The Cossacks, is it, you mean? The Cossacks?"

"Ay, just so, the Cusacks. They 're from Clare Island, and thereabouts; and there 's more of them in Meath. They 're my mother's people, and was always real devils for fighting."

I burst out into an immoderate fit of laughing at Mike's etymology, which thus converted Hetman Platoff into a Galway man.

"Oh, murder! is n't it cruel to hear you laugh that way! There now, alanna! be asy, and I'll tell you more news. We've the house to ourselves to-day. The ould gentleman's down at Behlem, and the daughter's in Lisbon, making great preparations for a grand ball they're to give when you are quite well."

"I hope I shall be with the army in a few days, Mike; and certainly, if I'm able to move about, I'll not remain longer in Lisbon."

"Arrah, don't say so, now! When was you ever so comfortable? Upon my conscience, it's more like Paradise than anything else. If ye see the dinner we sit down to every day; and as for drink, — if it was n't that I sleep on a ground-floor, I'd seldom see a blanket!"

"Well, certainly, Mike, I agree with you, these are hard things to tear ourselves away from."

"Are n't they now, sir? And then Miss Catherine, I'm taching her Irish!"

"Teaching her Irish! for Heaven's sake, what use can she make of Irish?"

"Ah, the crayture, she does n't know better; and as she was always bothering me to learn her English, I promised one day to do it; but ye see, somehow, I never was very proficient in strange tongues; so I thought to myself Irish will do as well. So, you perceive, we're taking a course of Irish literature, as Mr. Lynch says in Athlone; and, upon my conscience, she's an apt scholar."

"'Good-morning to you, Katey,' says Mr. Power to her the other day, as he passed through the hall. 'Good-morning, my dear; I hear you speak English perfectly now?'

"'*Honia mon diaoul*,' says she, making a curtsey.

"Be the powers, I thought he'd die with the laughing.

"'Well, my dear, I hope you don't mean it, — do you know what you're saying?'

"'Honor bright, Major!' says I, — 'honor bright!' and I gave him a wink at the same time.

"'Oh, that's it!' said he, 'is it!' and so he went off holding his hands to his sides with the bare laughing; and your honor knows it was n't a blessing she wished him, for all that."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONFESSION.

"What a strange position this of mine!" thought I, a few mornings after the events detailed in the last chapter. "How very fascinating in some respects, how full of all the charm of romance, and how confoundly difficult to see one's way through!"

To understand my cogitation right, *figurez-vous*, my dear reader, a large and splendidly furnished drawing-room, from one end of which an orangery in full blossom opens; from the other is seen a delicious little boudoir, where books, bronzes, pictures and statues, in all the artistique disorder of a lady's sanctum, are bathed in a deep purple light from a stained glass window of the seventeenth century.

On a small table beside the wood fire, whose mellow light is flirting with the sunbeams upon the carpet, stands an antique silver breakfast-service, which none but the hand of Benvenuto could have chiselled; beside it sits a girl, young and beautiful; her dark eyes, beaming beneath their long lashes, are fixed with an expression of watchful interest upon a pale and sickly youth, who, lounging upon a sofa opposite, is carelessly turning over the leaves of a new journal, or gazing steadfastly on the fretted gothic of the ceiling, while his thoughts are travelling many a mile away. The lady being the Senhora Inez; the nonchalant invalid, your unworthy acquaintance, Charles O'Malley.

What a very strange position to be sure.

"Then you are not equal to this ball to-night?" said she, after a pause of some minutes.

I turned as she spoke; her words had struck audibly upon my ear, but, lost in my revery, I could but repeat my own fixed thought, — how strange to be so situated!

"You are really very tiresome, Signor; I assure you, you are. I have been giving you a most elegant description of the Casino *fête*, and the beautiful costume of our Lisbon belles, but I can get nothing from you but this muttered something, which may be very shocking for aught I know. I 'm sure your friend, Major Power, would be much more attentive to me; that is," added she, archly, "if Miss Dashwood were not present."

"What! why! You don't mean that there is anything there — that Power is paying attention to — "

"*Madre divina*, how that seems to interest you, and how red you are! If it were not that you never met her before, and that your acquaintance did not seem to make rapid progress, then I should say you are in love with her yourself."

I had to laugh at this, but felt my face flushing more. "And so," said I, affecting a careless and indifferent tone, "the gay Fred Power is smitten at last!"

"Was it so very difficult a thing to accomplish?" said she, slyly.

"He seems to say so, at least. And the lady, how does she appear to receive his attentions?"

"Oh, I should say with evident pleasure and satisfaction, as all girls do the advances of men they don't care for, nor intend to care for."

"Indeed," said I, slowly, "indeed, Senhora?" looking into her eyes as I spoke, as if to read if the lesson were destined for my benefit.

"There, don't stare so! — every one knows that."

"So you don't think, then, that Lucy, — I mean Miss Dashwood — Why are you laughing so?"

"How can I help it; your calling her Lucy is so good, I wish she heard it; she 's the very proudest girl I ever knew."

"But to come back; you really think she does not care for him?"

"Not more than for you; and I may be pardoned for the simile, having seen your meeting. But let me give you the news of our own *fête*. Saturday is the day fixed; and you must be quite well, — I insist upon it. Miss Dashwood has promised to come, — no small concession; for after all she has never once been here since the day you frightened her.

I can't help laughing at my blunder, — the two people I had promised myself should fall desperately in love with each other, and who will scarcely meet."

"But I trusted," said I, pettishly, "that you were not disposed to resign your own interest in me?"

"Neither was I," said she, with an easy smile, "except that I have so many admirers. I might even spare to my friends; though after all I should be sorry to lose you, I like you."

"Yes," said I, half bitterly, "as girls do those they never intend to care for; is it not so?"

"Perhaps, yes, and perhaps — But is it going to rain? How provoking! and I have ordered my horse. Well, Signor Carlos, I leave you to your delightful newspaper, and all the magnificent descriptions of battles and sieges and skirmishes of which you seem doomed to pine without ceasing. There, don't kiss my hand twice; that's not right."

"Well, let me begin again —"

"I shall not breakfast with you any more. But tell me, am I to order a costume for you in Lisbon; or will you arrange all that yourself? You must come to the *fête,* you know."

"If you would be so very kind."

"I will, then, be so very kind; and once more, *adios.*" So saying, and with a slight motion of her hand, she smiled a good-by, and left me.

"What a lovely girl!" thought I, as I rose and walked to the window, muttering to myself Othello's line, and —

> "When I love thee not, chaos is come again."

In fact, it was the perfect expression of my feeling; the only solution to all the difficulties surrounding me, being to fall desperately, irretrievably in love with the fair senhora, which, all things considered, was not a very desperate resource for a gentleman in trouble. As I thought over the hopelessness of one attachment, I turned calmly to consider all the favorable points of the other. She was truly beautiful, attractive in every sense; her manner most fascinating, and her disposition, so far as I could pronounce, perfectly amiable. I felt already something more than interest about her; how very easy would be the transition to a stronger feeling! There was an *éclat*, too, about being her accepted lover that had its charm. She was the belle *par excellence* of Lisbon; and then a sense of pique crossed my mind as I reflected what would Lucy say of him whom she had slighted and insulted, when he became the husband of the beautiful millionnaire Senhora Inez?

As my meditations had reached thus far, the door opened stealthily, and Catherine appeared, her finger upon her lips, and her gesture indicating caution. She carried on her arm a mass of drapery covered by a large mantle, which throwing off as she entered, she displayed before me a rich blue domino with silver embroidery. It was large and loose in its folds, so as thoroughly to conceal the figure of any wearer. This she held up before me for an instant without speaking; when at length, seeing my curiosity fully excited, she said, —

"This is the senhora's domino. I should be ruined if the knew I showed it; but I promised — that is, I told — "

"Yes, yes, I understand," relieving her embarrassment about the source of her civilities; "go on."

"Well, there are several others like it, but with this small difference, instead of a carnation, which all the others have embroidered upon the cuff, I have made it a rose, — you perceive? La Senhora knows nothing of this, — none save yourself knows it. I 'm sure I may trust you with the secret."

"Fear not in the least, Catherine; you have rendered me a great service. Let me look at it once more; ah, there 's no difficulty in detecting it. And you are certain she is unaware of it?"

"Perfectly so; she has several other costumes, but in this one I know she intends some surprise, so be upon your guard."

With these words, carefully once more concealing the rich dress beneath the mantle, she withdrew; while I strolled forth to wonder what mystery might lie beneath this scheme, and speculate how far I myself was included in the plot she spoke of.

For the few days which succeeded, I passed my time much alone. The senhora was but seldom at home; and I remarked that Power rarely came to see me. A strange feeling of half-coolness had latterly grown between us, and instead of the open confidence we formerly indulged in when together, we appeared now rather to chat over things of mere every-day interest than of our own immediate plans and prospects. There was a kind of pre-occupation, too, in his manner that struck me; his mind seemed ever straying from the topics he talked of to something remote, and altogether, he was no longer the frank and reckless dragoon I had ever known him. What could be the meaning of this change? Had he found out by any accident that I was to blame in my conduct towards Lucy; had any erroneous impression of my interview with her reached his ears? This was most improbable; besides, there was nothing in that to draw down his censure or condemnation, however represented; and was it that he was himself in love with her, that, devoted heart and soul to Lucy, he regarded me as a successful rival, preferred before him! Oh, how could I have so long blinded myself to the fact! This was the true solution of the whole difficulty. I had more than once suspected this to be so; now all the circumstances of proof poured in upon me. I called to mind his agitated manner the night of my arrival in Lisbon, his thousand questions concerning the reasons of my furlough; and then, lately, the look of unfeigned pleasure with which he heard me resolve to join my regiment the moment I was sufficiently recovered. I remembered also how assiduously he pressed his intimacy with the senhora, Lucy's dearest friend here; his continual visits at the villa; those long walks in the garden, where his very look betokened some confidential mission of the heart. Yes, there was no doubt of it, he loved Lucy Dashwood! Alas, there seemed to be no end to the complication of my misfortunes; one by one I appeared fated to lose whatever had a hold upon my affections, and to stand alone, unloved and uncared for in the world. My thoughts turned towards the senhora, but I could not deceive myself into any hope there. My own feelings were untouched, and hers I felt to be equally so.

Young as I was, there was no mistaking the easy smile of coquetry, the merry laugh of flattered vanity, for a deeper and holier feeling. And then I did not wish it otherwise. One only had taught me to feel how ennobling, how elevating in all its impulses can be a deep-rooted passion for a young and beautiful girl! From her eyes alone had I caught the inspiration that made me pant for glory and distinction. I could not transfer the allegiance of my heart, since it had taught that very heart to beat high and proudly. Lucy, lost to me forever as she must be, was still more than any other woman ever could be; all the past clung to her memory, all the prestige of the future must point to it also.

And Power, why had he not trusted, why had he not confided in me? Was this like my old and tried friend? Alas! I was forgetting that in his eye I was the favored rival, and not the despised, rejected suitor.

"It is past now," thought I, as I rose and walked into the garden; "the dream that made life a fairy tale is dispelled; the cold reality of the world is before me, and my path lies a lonely and solitary one." My first resolution was to see Power, and relieve his mind of any uneasiness as regarded my pretentions; they existed no longer. As for me, I was no obstacle to his happiness; it was, then, but fair and honorable that I should tell him so; this done, I should leave Lisbon at once. The cavalry had for the most part been ordered to the rear; still there was always something going forward at the outposts.

The idea of active service, the excitement of a campaigning life, cheered me, and I advanced along the dark alley of the garden with a lighter and a freer heart. My resolves were not destined to meet delay; as I turned the angle of a walk, Power was before me. He was leaning against a tree, his hands crossed upon his bosom, his head bowed forward, and his whole air and attitude betokening deep reflection.

He started as I came up, and seemed almost to change color.

"Well, Charley," said he, after a moment's pause, "you look better this morning. How goes the arm?"

"The arm is ready for service again, and its owner most anxious for it. Do you know, Fred, I 'm thoroughly weary of this life."

"They 're little better, however, at the lines. The French are in position, but never adventure a movement; and except some few affairs at the pickets, there is really nothing to do."

"No matter, remaining here can never serve one's interests, and besides, I have accomplished what I came for —"

I was about to add, "the restoration of my health," when he suddenly interrupted me, eying me fixedly as he spoke.

"Indeed! indeed! Is that so?"

"Yes," said I, half puzzled at the tone and manner of the speech; "I can join now when I please; meanwhile, Fred, I have been thinking of you. Yes, don't be surprised, at the very moment we met you were in my thoughts."

I took his arm as I said this, and led him down the alley.

"We are too old and, I trust, too true friends, Fred, to have secrets from each other, and yet we have been playing this silly game for some weeks past. Now, my dear fellow, I have yours, and it is only fair justice you should have mine, and, faith, I feel you 'd have discovered it long since, had your thoughts been as free as I have known them to be. Fred, you are in love; there, don't wince, man, I know it; but hear me out. You believe me to be so also; nay, more, you think that my chances of success are better, stronger than your own; learn, then, that I have none, — absolutely none. Don't interrupt me now, for this avowal cuts me deeply; my own heart alone knows what I suffer as I record my wrecked fortunes; but I repeat it, my hopes are at end forever; but, Fred, my boy, I cannot lose my friend too. If I have been the obstacle to your path, I am so no more. Ask me not why; it is enough that I speak in all truth and sincerity. Ere three days I shall leave this, and with it all the hopes that once beamed upon my fortunes, and all the happiness, — nay, not all, my boy, for I feel some thrill at my heart yet, as I think that I have been true to you."

I know not what more I spoke nor how he replied to me. I felt the warm grasp of his hand, I saw his delighted smile; the words of grateful acknowledgment his lips uttered conveyed but an imperfect meaning to my ear, and I remembered no more.

The courage which sustained me for the moment sank gradually as I meditated over my avowal, and I could scarce help accusing Power of a breach of friendship for exacting a confession which, in reality, I had volunteered to give him. How Lucy herself would think of my conduct was ever occurring to my thoughts, and I felt, as I ruminated upon the conjectures it might give rise to, how much more likely a favorable opinion might now be formed of me, than when such an estimation could have crowned me with delight.

"Yes," thought I, "she will at last learn to know him who loved her with truth and with devoted affection; and when the blight of all his hopes is accomplished, the fair fame of his fidelity will be proved. The march, the bivouac, the battle-field, are now all to me; and the campaign alone presents a prospect which may fill up the aching void that disappointed and ruined hopes have left behind them."

How I longed for the loud call of the trumpet, the clash of the steel, the tramp of the war-horse; though the proud distinction of a soldier's life were less to me in the distance than the mad and whirlwind passion of a charge, and the loud din of the rolling artillery.

It was only some hours after, as I sat alone in my chamber, that all the circumstances of our meeting came back clearly to my memory, and I could not help muttering to myself, —

"It is indeed a hard lot, that to cheer the heart of my friend, I must bear witness to the despair that shed darkness on my own."

CHAPTER XVI.

MY CHARGER.

ALTHOUGH I felt my heart relieved of a heavy load by the confession I had made to Power, yet still I shrank from meeting him for some days after; a kind of fear lest he should in any way recur to our conversation continually beset me, and I felt that the courage which bore me up for my first effort would desert me on the next occasion.

My determination to join my regiment was now made up, and I sent forward a resignation of my appointment to Sir George Dashwood's staff, which I had never been in health to fulfil, and commenced with energy all my preparations for a speedy departure.

The reply to my rather formal letter was a most kind note written by himself. He regretted the unhappy cause which had so long separated us, and though wishing, as he expressed it, to have me near him, perfectly approved of my resolution.

"Active service alone, my dear boy, can ever place you in the position you ought to occupy; and I rejoice the more at your decision in this matter, as I feared the truth of certain reports here, which attributed to you other plans than those which a campaign suggests. My mind is now easy on this score, and I pray you forgive me if my congratulations are *mal à propos.*"

After some hints for my future management, and a promise of some letters to his friends at headquarters, he concluded: —

"As this climate does not seem to suit my daughter, I have applied for a change, and am in daily hope of obtaining it. Before going, however, I must beg your acceptance of the charger which my groom will deliver to your servant with this. I was so struck with his figure and action that I purchased him before leaving England without well knowing why or wherefore. Pray let him see some service under your auspices, which he is most unlikely to do under mine. He has plenty of bone to be a weight carrier, and they tell me also that he has speed enough for anything."

Mike's voice in the lawn beneath interrupted my reading farther, and on looking out, I perceived him and Sir George Dashwood's servant standing beside a large and striking-looking horse, which they were both examining with all the critical accuracy of adepts.

"Arrah, is n't he a darling, a real beauty, every inch of him?"

"That 'ere splint don't signify nothing; he are n't the worse of it," said the English groom.

"Of coorse it does n't," replied Mike. "What a fore-hand, and the legs, clean as a whip!"

"There 's the best of him, though," interrupted the other, patting the strong hind-quarters with his hand. "There 's the stuff to push him along through heavy ground and carry him over timber."

"Or a stone wall," said Mike, thinking of Galway.

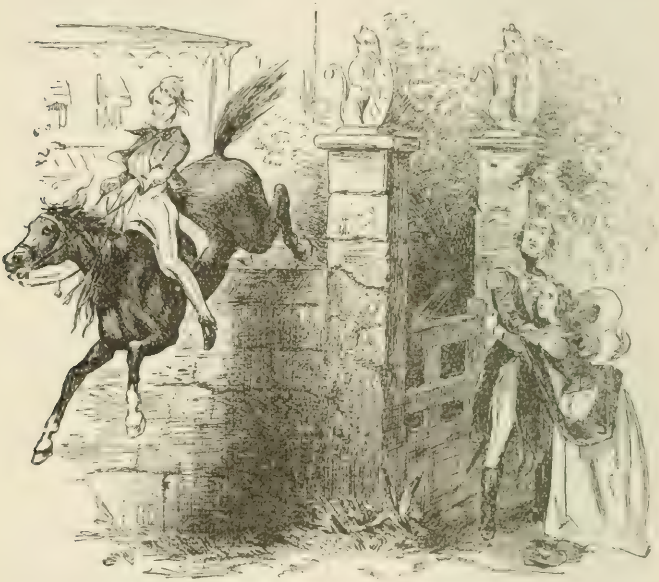
My own impatience to survey my present had now brought me into the conclave, and before many minutes were over I had him saddled, and was cantering around the lawn with a spirit and energy I had not felt for months long. Some small fences lay before me, and over these he carried me with all the ease and freedom of a trained hunter. My courage mounted with the excitement, and I looked eagerly around for some more bold and dashing leap.

"You may take him over the avenue gate," said the English groom, divining with a jockey's readiness what I looked for; "he 'll do it, never fear him."

Strange as my equipment was, with an undress jacket flying loosely open, and a bare head, away I went. The gate which the groom spoke of was a strongly-barred one of oak timber, nearly five feet high, — its difficulty as a leap only consisted in the winding approach, and the fact that it opened upon a hard road beyond it.

In a second or two a kind of half fear came across me. My long illness had unnerved me, and my limbs felt weak and yielding; but as I pressed into the canter, that secret sympathy between the horse and his rider shot suddenly through me, I pressed my spurs to his flanks, and dashed him at it.

Unaccustomed to such treatment, the noble animal bounded madly forward. With two tremendous plunges he sprang wildly in the air, and shaking his long mane with passion, stretched out at the gallop.



My own blood boiled now as tempestuously as his, and with a shout of reckless triumph, I rose him at the gate. Just at the instant two figures appeared before it, — the copse had concealed their approach hitherto, — but they stood now as if transfixed. The wild attitude of the horse, the not less wild cry of his rider, had deprived them for a time of all energy; and overcome by the sudden danger, they seemed rooted to the ground. What I said, spoke, begged, or imprecated, Heaven knows — not I. But they stirred not! One moment more and they must lie trampled beneath my horse's hoofs, — he was already on his haunches for the bound, — when, wheeling half aside, I faced him at the wall. It was at least a foot higher and of solid stone masonry, and as I did so I felt that I was perilling my life to save theirs. One vigorous dash of the spur I gave him, as I lifted him to the leap. He bounded beneath it quick as lightning; still, with a spring like a rocket, he rose into the air, cleared the wall, and stood trembling and frightened on the road outside.

"Safe, by Jupiter! and splendidly done, too," cried a voice near me, that I immediately recognized as Sir George Dashwood's.

"Lucy, my love, look up, — Lucy, my dear, there 's no danger now. She has fainted! O'Malley, fetch some water, — fast. Poor fellow, your own nerves seem shaken. Why, you 've let your horse go! Come here, for Heaven's sake! Support her for an instant. I 'll fetch some water."

It appeared to me like a dream; I leaned against the pillar of the gate; the cold and death-like features of Lucy Dashwood lay motionless upon my arm; her hand, falling heavily upon my shoulder, touched my cheek. The tramp of my horse, as he galloped onward, was the only sound that broke the silence, as I stood there, gazing steadfastly upon the pale brow and paler cheek, down which a solitary tear was slowly stealing. I knew not how the minutes passed; my memory took no note of time, but at length a gentle tremor thrilled her frame, a slight, scarce-perceptible blush colored her fair face, her lips slightly parted, and heaving a deep sigh, she looked around her. Gradually her eyes turned and met mine. Oh, the bliss unutterable of that moment! It was no longer the look of cold scorn she had given me last; the expression was one of soft and speaking gratitude. She seemed to read my very heart, and know its truth; there was a tone of deep and compassionate interest in the glance; and forgetting all, — everything that had passed, — all save my unaltered, unalterable love, I kneeled beside her, and in words burning as my own heart burned, poured out my tale of mingled sorrow and affection with all the eloquence of passion. I vindicated my unshaken faith, — reconciling the conflicting evidences with the proofs I proffered of my attachment. If my moments were measured, I spent them not idly. I called to witness how every action of my soldier's life emanated from her; how her few and chance words had decided the character of my fate; if aught of fame or honor were my portion, to her I owed it. As, hurried onwards by my ardent hopes, I forgot Power and all about him, a step up the gravel walk came rapidly nearer, and I had but time to assume my former attitude beside Lucy as her father came up.

"Well, Charley, is she better? Oh, I see she is. Here, we have the whole household at our heels." So saying, he pointed to a string of servants pressing eagerly forward with every species of restorative that Portuguese ingenuity has invented.

The next moment we were joined by the senhora, who, pale with fear, seemed scarcely less in need of assistance than her friend.

Amidst questions innumerable; explanations sought for on all sides; mistakes and misconceptions as to the whole occurrence, — we took our way towards the villa, Lucy walking between Sir George and Donna Inez, while I followed, leaning upon Power's arm.

"They 've caught him again, O'Malley," said the general, turning half round to me; "he, too, seemed as much frightened as any of us."

"It is time, Sir George, I should think of thanking you. I never was so mounted in my life — "

"A splendid charger, by Jove!" said Power; "but, Charley, my lad, no more feats of this nature, if you love me. No girl's heart will stand such continual assaults as your winning horsemanship submits it to."

I was about making some half-angry reply, when he continued: "There, don't look sulky; I have news for you. Quill has just arrived. I met him at Lisbon; he has got leave of absence for a few days, and is coming to our masquerade here this evening."

"This evening!" said I, in amazement; "why, is it so soon?"

"Of course it is. Have you not got all your trappings ready? The Dashwoods came out here on purpose to spend the day; but come, I 'll drive you into town. My tilbury is ready, and we 'll both look out for our costumes." So saying, he led me along towards the house, when, after a rapid change of my toilet, we set out for Lisbon.

CHAPTER XVII.

MAURICE.

It seemed a conceded matter between Power and myself that we should never recur to the conversation we held in the garden; and so, although we dined *tête-à-tête* that day, neither of us ventured, by any allusion the most distant, to advert to what it was equally evident was uppermost in the minds of both.

All our endeavors, therefore, to seem easy and unconcerned were in vain; a restless anxiety to seem interested about things and persons we were totally indifferent to, pervaded all our essays at conversation. By degrees, we grew weary of the parts we were acting, and each relapsed into a moody silence, thinking over his plans and projects, and totally forgetting the existence of the other.

The decanter was passed across the table without speaking, a half nod intimated the bottle was standing; and except an occasional malediction upon an intractable cigar, nothing was heard.

Such was the agreeable occupation we were engaged in, when, towards nine o'clock, the door opened, and the great Maurice himself stood before us.

"Pleasant fellows, upon my conscience, and jovial over their liquor! Confound your smoking! That may do very well in a bivouac. Let us have something warm!"

Quill's interruption was a most welcome one to both parties, and we rejoiced with a sincere pleasure at his coming.

"What shall it be, Maurice? Port or sherry mulled, and an anchovy?"

"Or what say you to a bowl of bishop?" said I.

"Hurrah for the Church, Charley! Let us have the bishop; and not to disparage Fred's taste, we 'll be eating the anchovy while the liquor 's concocting."

"Well, Maurice, and now for the news. How are matters at Torres Vedras? Anything like movement in that quarter?"

"Nothing very remarkable. Massena made a reconnoissance some days since, and one of our batteries threw a shower of grape among the staff, which spoiled the procession, and sent them back in very disorderly time. Then we've had a few skirmishes to the front with no great results, — a few courts-martial, bad grub, and plenty of grumbling."

"Why, what would they have? It's a great thing to hold the French army in check within a few marches of Lisbon."

"Charley, my man, who cares twopence for the French army or Lisbon or the Portuguese or the Junta or anything about it? — every man is pondering over his own affairs. One fellow wants to get home again, and be sent upon some recruiting station. Another wishes to get a step or two in promotion, to come to Torres Vedras, where even the *grande armée* can't. Then some of us are in love, and some of us are in debt. Their is neither glory nor profit to be had. But here's the bishop, smoking and steaming with an odor of nectar!"

"And our fellows, have you seen them lately?"

"I dined with yours on Tuesday. Was it Tuesday? Yes. I dined with them. By-the-bye, Sparks was taken prisoner that morning."

"Sparks taken prisoner! Poor fellow. I am sincerely sorry. How did it happen, Maurice?"

"Very simply. Sparks had a forage patrol towards Vieda, and set out early in the morning with his party. It seemed that they succeeded perfectly, and were returning to the lines, when poor Sparks, always susceptible where the sex are concerned, saw, or thought he saw, a lattice gently open as he rode from the village, and a very taper finger make a signal to him. Dropping a little behind the rest, he waited till his men had debouched upon the road, when riding quietly up, he coughed a couple of times to attract the fair unknown; a handkerchief waved from the lattice in reply, which was speedily closed, and our valiant cornet accordingly dismounted and entered the house.

"The remainder of the adventure is soon told; for in a few seconds after, two men mounted on one horse were seen galloping at top speed towards the French lines, — the foremost being a French officer of the 4th Cuirassiers, the gentleman with his face to the tail, our friend Sparks; the lovely unknown being a *vieille moustache* of Loison's corps, who had been wounded in a skirmish some days before, and lay waiting an opportunity of rejoining his party. One of our prisoners knew this fellow well; he had been promoted from the ranks, and was a Hercules for feats of strength; so that, after all, Sparks could not help himself."

"Well, I 'm really sorry; but as you say, Sparks's tender nature is always the ruin of him."

"Of him! ay, and of you; and of Power; and of myself; of all of us. Is n't it the sweet creatures that make fools of us from Father Adam down to Maurice Quill, neither sparing age nor rank in the service, half-pay nor the veteran battalion — it 's all one? Pass the jug, there. O'Shaughnessy — "

"Ah, by-the-bye, how 's the major?"

"Charmingly; only a little bit in a scrape just now. Sir Arthur — Lord Wellington, I mean — had him up for his fellows being caught pillaging, and gave him a devil of a rowing a few days ago.

"'Very disorderly corps yours, Major O'Shaughnessy,' said the general; 'more men up for punishment than any regiment in the service.'

"Shaugh muttered something; but his voice was lost in a loud cock-a-doo-do-doo, that some bold chanticleer set up at the moment.

"'If the officers do their duty, Major O'Shaughnessy, these acts of insubordination do not occur.'

"'Cock-a-doo-do-doo,' was the reply. Some of the staff found it hard not to laugh; but the general went on, —

"'If, therefore, the practice does not cease, I 'll draft the men into West India regiments.'

"'Cock-a-doo-do-doo.'

"'And if any articles pillaged from the inhabitants are detected in the quarters, or about the person of the troops —'

"'Cock-a-doo-do-*doo*,' screamed louder here than ever.

"'Damn that cock! Where is it?'

"There was a general look around on all sides, which seemed in vain; when a tremendous repetition of the cry resounded from O'Shaughnessy's coat pocket, — thus detecting the valiant major himself in the very practice of his corps. There was no standing this: every one burst out into a peal of laughing; and Lord Wellington himself could not resist, but turned away, muttering to himself as he went, 'Damned robbers — every man of them!' while a final war-note from the major's pocket closed the interview."

"Confound you, Maurice, you 've always some villanous narrative or other. You never crossed a street for shelter without making something out of it."

"True this time, as sure as my name 's Maurice; but the bowl is empty."

"Never mind, here comes its successor. How long can you stay among us?"

"A few days at most. Just took a run off to see the sights. I was all over Lisbon this morning; saw the Inquisition and the cells and the place where they tried the fellows, — the kind of grand jury room with the great picture of Adam and Eve at the end of it. What a beautiful creature she is; hair down to her waist, and such eyes! 'Ah, ye darling!' said I to myself, 'small blame to him for what he did. Would n't I ate every crab in the garden, if ye asked me!'"

"I must certainly go to see her, Maurice. Is she very Portuguese in her style?"

"Devil a bit of it! She might be a Limerick woman with elegant brown hair and blue eyes and a skin like snow."

"Come, come, they 've pretty girls in Lisbon too, Doctor."

"Yes, faith," said Power, "that they have."

"Nothing like Ireland, boys; not a bit of it; they 're the girls for my money; and where 's the man can resist them? From Saint Patrick, that had to go and live in the Wicklow mountains —"

"Saint Kevin, you mean, Doctor."

"Sure it's all the same, they were twins. I made a little song about them one evening last week, — the women I mean."

"Let us have it, Maurice; let us have it, old fellow What's the measure?"

"Short measure; four little verses, devil a more!"

"But the time, I mean?"

"Whenever you like to sing it; here it is," —

THE GIRLS OF THE WEST.

AIR, — "*Teddy, ye Gander.*"

(*With feeling: but not too slow.*)

You may talk, if you please,
Of the brown Portuguese,
But wherever you roam, wherever you roam,
You nothing will meet,
Half so lovely or sweet,
As the girls at home, the girls at home.

Their eyes are not sloes,
Nor so long is their nose,
But between me and you, between me and you,
They are just as alarming,
And ten times more charming,
With hazel and blue, with hazel and blue.

They don't ogle a man,
O'er the top of their fan
Till his heart 's in a flame, till his heart 's in a flame;
But though bashful and shy,
They 've a look in their eye
That just comes to the same, just comes to the same

No mantillas they sport,
But a petticoat short
Shows an ankle the best, an ankle the best,
And a leg — but, O murther!
I dare not go further;
So here 's to the west, so here 's to the west.

"Now that really is a sweet little thing. Moore's is n't it?"

"Not a bit of it; my own muse, every word of it."

"And the music?" said I.

"My own, too. Too much spice in that bowl; that's an invariable error in your devisers of drink, to suppose that the tipple you start with can please your palate to the last; they forget that as we advance, either in years or lush, our tastes simplify."

"*Nous revenons à nos premières amours.* Is n't that it?"

"No, not exactly, for we go even further; for if you mark the progression of a sensible man's fluids, you'll find what an emblem of life it presents to you. What is his initiatory glass of 'Chablis' that he throws down with his oysters but the budding expectancy of boyhood, — the appetizing sense of pleasure to come; then follows the sherry with his soup, that warming glow which strength and vigor in all their consciousness impart, as a glimpse of life is opening before him. Then youth succeeds — buoyant, wild, tempestuous youth — foaming and sparkling like the bright champagne whose stormy surface subsides into a myriad of bright stars."

"*Œil de perdrix.*"

"Not a bit of it; woman's own eye, brilliant, sparkling, life-giving —"

"Devil take the fellow, he's getting poetical!"

"Ah, Fred! if that could only last; but one must come to the burgundies with his maturer years. Your first glass of hermitage is the algebraic sign for five-and-thirty, — the glorious burst is over; the pace is still good, to be sure, but the great enthusiasm is past. You can afford to look forward, but confound it, you've a long way to look back also."

"I say, Charley, our friend has contrived to finish the bishop during his disquisition; the bowl's quite empty."

"You don't say so, Fred. To be sure, how a man does forget himself in abstract speculations; but let us have a little more, I've not concluded my homily."

"Not a glass, Maurice; it's already past nine. We are all pledged to the masquerade, and before we 've dressed and got there, 't will be late enough."

"But I 'm not disguised yet, my boy, nor half."

"Well, they must take you *au naturel*, as our countrymen do their potatoes."

"Yes, Doctor, Fred 's right; we had better start."

"Well, I can't help it; I 've recorded my opposition to the motion, but I must submit; and now that I 'm on my legs, explain to me what 's that very dull-looking old lamp up there?"

"That 's the moon, man; the full moon."

"Well, I 've no objection; I 'm full too: so come along, lads."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MASQUERADE.

To form one's impression of a masked ball from the attempts at this mode of entertainment in our country, is but to conceive a most imperfect and erroneous notion. With us, the first *coup d'œil* is everything; the nuns, the shepherdesses, the Turks, sailors, eastern princes, watchmen, moonshees, milestones, devils, and Quakers are all very well in their way as they pass in the review before us, but when we come to mix in the crowd, we discover that, except the turban and the cowl, the crook and the broad-brim, no further disguise is attempted or thought of. The nun, forgetting her vow and her vestments, is flirting with the devil; the watchman, a very fastidious elegant, is ogling the fishwomen through his glass; while the Quaker is performing a *pas seul* Alberti might be proud of, in a quadrille of riotous Turks and half-tipsy Hindoos; in fact, the whole wit of the scene consists in absurd associations. Apart from this, the actors have rarely any claims upon your attention; for even supposing a person clever enough to sustain his character, whatever it be, you must also supply the other personages of the drama, or, in stage phrase, he 'll have nothing to "play up to." What would be Bardolph without Pistol; what Sir Lucius O'Triuger without Acres? It is the relief which throws out the disparities and contradictions of life that afford us most amusement; hence it is that one swallow can no more make a summer, than one well-sustained character can give life to a masquerade. Without such sympathies, such points of contact, all the leading features of the individual, making him act and be acted upon, are lost; the characters being mere parallel lines, which, however near they approach, never bisect or cross each other.

This is not the case abroad: the domino, which serves for mere concealment, is almost the only dress assumed, and the real disguise is therefore thrown from necessity upon the talents, whatever they be, of the wearer. It is no longer a question of a beard or a spangled mantle, a Polish dress or a pasteboard nose; the mutation of voice, the assumption of a different manner, walk, gesture, and mode of expression, are all necessary, and no small tact is required to effect this successfully.

I may be pardoned this little digression, as it serves to explain in some measure how I felt on entering the splendidly lit up *salons* of the villa, crowded with hundreds of figures in all the varied costumes of a carnival, — the sounds of laughter mingled with the crash of the music; the hurrying hither and thither of servants with refreshments; the crowds gathered around fortune-tellers, whose predictions threw the parties at each moment into shouts of merriment; the eager following of some disappointed domino, interrogating every one to find out a lost mask. For some time I stood an astonished spectator at the kind of secret intelligence which seemed to pervade the whole assemblage, when suddenly a mask, who for some time had been standing beside me, whispered in French, —

"If you pass your time in this manner, you must not feel surprised if your place be occupied."

I turned hastily round, but she was gone. She, I say, for the voice was clearly a woman's; her pink domino could be no guide, for hundreds of the same color passed me every instant. The meaning of the allusion I had little doubt of. I turned to speak to Power, but he was gone; and for the first moment of my life, the bitterness of rivalry crossed my mind. It was true I had resigned all pretensions in his favor. My last meeting with Lucy had been merely to justify my own character against an impression that weighed heavily on me; still, I thought he might have waited, — another day and I should be far away, neither to witness nor grieve over his successes.

"You still hesitate," whispered some one near me.

I wheeled round suddenly, but could not detect the speaker, and was again relapsing into my own musings, when the same voice repeated, —

"The white domino with the blue cape. Adieu."

Without waiting to reflect upon the singularity of the occurrence, I now hurried along through the dense crowd, searching on every side for the domino.

"Is n't that O'Malley ?" said an Englishman to his friend.

"Yes," replied the other; "the very man we want. O'Malley, find a partner; we have been searching a *vis-à-vis* this ten minutes."

The speaker was an officer I had met at Sir George Dashwood's.

"How did you discover me ?" said I, suddenly.

"Not a very difficult thing if you carry your mask in your hand that way," was the answer.

And I now perceived that in the distraction of my thoughts I had been carrying my mask in this manner since my coming into the room.

"There now, what say you to the blue domino ? I saw her foot, and a girl with such an instep must be a waltzer."

I looked round, a confused effort at memory passing across my mind; my eyes fell at the instant upon the embroidered sleeve of the domino, where a rosebud worked in silver at once reminded me of Catrina's secret. "Ah," thought I, "La Senhora herself!" She was leaning upon the arm of a tall and portly figure in black; who this was I knew not, nor sought to discover, but at once advancing towards Donna Inez asked her to waltz.

Without replying to me she turned towards her companion, who seemed as it were to press her acceptance of my offer; she hesitated, however, for an instant, and curtsying deeply, declined it. "Well," thought I, "she at least has not recognized me."

"And yet, Senhora," said I, half jestingly, "I *have* seen you join a bolero before now."

"You evidently mistake me," was the reply, but in a voice so well feigned as almost to convince me she was right.

"Nay, more," said I, "under your own fair auspices did I myself first adventure one."

"Still in error, believe me; I am not known to you."

"And yet I have a talisman to refresh your memory, should you dare me further."

At this instant my hand was grasped warmly by a passing mask. I turned round rapidly, and Power whispered in my ear, —

"Yours forever, Charley; you 've made my fortune."

As he hurried on I could perceive that he supported a lady on his arm, and that she wore a loose white domino with a deep blue cape. In a second all thought of Inez was forgotten, and anxious only to conceal my emotion, I turned away and mingled in the crowd. Lost to all around me, I wandered carelessly, heedlessly on, neither noticing the glittering throng around, nor feeling a thought in common with the gay and joyous spirits that flitted by. The night wore on, my melancholy and depression growing ever deeper, yet so spell-bound was I that I could not leave the place. A secret sense that it was the last time we were to meet had gained entire possession of me, and I longed to speak a few words ere we parted forever.

I was leaning on a window which looked out upon the courtyard, when suddenly the tramp of horses attracted my attention, and I saw by the clear moonlight a group of mounted men, whose long cloaks and tall helmets announced dragoons, standing around the porch. At the same moment the door of the *salon* opened, and an officer in undress, splashed and travel-stained, entered. Making his way rapidly through the crowd, he followed the servant, who introduced him towards the supper-room. Thither the dense mass now pressed to learn the meaning of the singular apparition; while my own curiosity, not less excited, led me towards the door. As I crossed the hall, however, my progress was interrupted by a group of persons, among whom I saw an aide-de-camp of Lord Wellington's staff, narrating, as it were, some piece of newly-arrived intelligence. I had no time for further inquiry, when a door opened near me, and Sir George Dashwood, accompanied by several general officers, came forth, the officer I had first seen enter the ballroom along with them. Every one was by this unmasked, and eagerly looking to hear what had occurred.

"Then, Dashwood, you 'll send off an orderly at once?" said an old general officer beside me.

"This instant, my Lord. I 'll despatch an aide-de-camp.

The troops shall be in marching order before noon. Oh, here 's the man I want! O'Malley, come here. Mount your horse and dash into town. Send for Brotherton and M'Gregor to quarters, and announce the news as quickly as possible."

"But what am I to announce, Sir George?"

"That the French are in retreat, — Massena in retreat, my lad."

A tremendous cheer at this instant burst from the hundreds in the *salon,* who now heard the glorious tidings. Another cheer and another followed, — ten thousand *vivas* rose amidst the crash of the band, as it broke into a patriotic war chant. Such a scene of enthusiasm and excitement I never witnessed. Some wept with joy. Others threw themselves into their friends' arms.

"They 're all mad, every mother's son of them!" said Maurice Quill, as he elbowed his way through the mass; "and here 's an old vestal won't leave my arm. She has already embraced me three times, and we 've finished a flask of Malaga between us."

"Come, O'Malley, are you ready for the road?"

My horse was by this time standing saddled at the front. I sprang at once to the saddle, and without waiting for a second order, set out for Lisbon. Ten minutes had scarce elapsed, — the very shouts of joy of the delighted city were still ringing in my ears, — when I was once again back at the villa. As I mounted the steps into the hall, a carriage drew up, — it was Sir George Dashwood's. He came forward, his daughter leaning upon his arm.

"Why, O'Malley, I thought you had gone."

"I have returned, Sir George. Colonel Brotherton is in waiting, and the staff also. I have received orders to set out for Benejos, where the 14th are stationed, and have merely delayed to say adieu."

"Adieu, my dear boy, and God bless you!" said the warm-hearted old man, as he pressed my hand between both his. "Lucy, here 's your old friend about to leave; come and say good-by."

Miss Dashwood had stopped behind to adjust her shawl. I flew to her assistance. "Adieu, Miss Dashwood, and forever!" said I, in a broken voice, as I took her hand in mine. "This is not your domino," said I, eagerly, as a blue silk one peeped from beneath her mantle; "and the sleeve, too, — did you wear this?" She blushed slightly, and assented.

"I changed with the senhora, who wore mine all the evening."

"And Power, then, was not your partner?"

"I should think not, — for I never danced."

"Lucy, my love, are you ready? Come, be quick."

"Good-by, Mr. O'Malley, and *au revoir, n'est-ce pas?*"

I drew her glove from her hand as she spoke, and pressing my lips upon her fingers, placed her within the carriage. "Adieu, and *au revoir!*" said I. The carriage turned away, and a white glove was all that remained to me of Lucy Dashwood!

The carriage had turned the angle of the road, and its retiring sounds were growing gradually fainter, ere I recovered myself sufficiently to know where I stood. One absorbing thought alone possessed me. Lucy was not lost to me forever; Power was not my rival in that quarter, — that was enough for me. I needed no more to nerve my arm and steel my heart. As I reflected thus, the long loud blast of a trumpet broke upon the silence of the night, and admonished me to depart. I hurried to my room to make my few preparations for the road; but Mike had already anticipated everything here, and all was in readiness.

But one thing now remained, — to make my adieu to the senhora. With this intent, I descended a narrow winding stair which led from my dressing-room, and opened by a little terrace upon the flower-garden beside her apartments.

As I crossed the gravelled alley, I could not but think of the last time I had been there. It was on the eve of departure for the Douro. I recalled the few and fleeting moments of our leave-taking, and a thought flashed upon me, — what if she cared for me! What if, half in coquetry, half in reality, her heart was mixed up in those passages which daily association gives rise to?

I could not altogether acquit myself of all desire to make her believe me her admirer; nay, more, with the indolent *abandon* of my country, I had fallen into a thousand little schemes to cheat the long hours away, which, having no other object than the happiness of the moment, might yet color all her after-life with sorrow.

Let no one rashly pronounce me a coxcomb, vain and pretentious, for all this. In my inmost heart I had no feeling of selfishness mingled with the consideration. It was from no sense of my own merits, no calculation of my own chances of success, that I thought thus. Fortunately, at eighteen one's heart is uncontaminated with such an alloy of vanity. The first emotions of youth are pure and holy things, tempering our fiercer passions, and calming the rude effervescence of our boyish spirit; and when we strive to please, and hope to win affection, we insensibly fashion ourselves to nobler and higher thoughts, catching from the source of our devotion a portion of that charm that idealizes daily life, and makes our path in it a glorious and a bright one.

Who would not exchange all the triumph of his later days, the proudest moments of successful ambition, the richest trophies of hard-won daring, — for the short and vivid flash that first shot through his heart and told him he was loved. It is the opening consciousness of life, the first sense of power that makes of the mere boy a man, — a man in all his daring and his pride; and hence it is that in early life we feel ever prone to indulge those fancied attachments which elevate and raise us in our own esteem. Such was the frame of my mind when I entered the little boudoir where once before I had ventured on a similar errand.

As I closed the sash-door behind me, the gray dawn of breaking day scarcely permitted my seeing anything around me, and I felt my way towards the door of an adjoining room, where I supposed it was likely I should find the senhora. As I proceeded thus, with cautious step and beating heart, I thought I heard a sound near me. I stopped and listened, and was about again to move on, when a half-stifled sob fell upon my ear. Slowly and silently guiding my steps towards the sounds, I reached a sofa, when, my eyes growing by degrees more accustomed to the faint light, I could detect a figure which, at a glance, I recognized as Donna

Inez. A cashmere shawl was loosely thrown around her, and her face was buried in her hands. As she lay, to all seeming, still and insensible before me, her beautiful hair fell heavily upon her back and across her arm, and her whole attitude denoted the very abandonment of grief. A short convulsive shudder which slightly shook her frame alone gave evidence of life, except when a sob, barely audible in the death-like silence, escaped her.

I knelt silently down beside her, and gently withdrawing her hand, placed it within mine. A dreadful feeling of self-condemnation shot through me as I felt the gentle pressure of her taper fingers, which rested without a struggle in my grasp. My tears fell hot and fast upon that pale hand, as I bent in sadness over it, unable to utter a word. A rush of conflicting thoughts passed through my brain, and I knew not what to do. I now had no doubt upon my mind that she loved me, and that her present affliction was caused by my approaching departure.

"Dearest Inez!" I stammered out at length, as I pressed her hands to my lips, — "dearest Inez!" — a faint sob, and a slight pressure of her hand, was the only reply. "I have come to say good-by," continued I, gaining a little courage as I spoke; "a long good-by, too, in all likelihood. You have heard that we are ordered away, — there, don't sob, dearest, and, believe me, I had wished ere we parted to have spoken to you calmly and openly; but, alas, I cannot, — I scarcely know what I say."

"You will not forget me?" said she, in a low voice, that sank into my very heart. "You will not forget me?" As she spoke, her hand dropped heavily upon my shoulder, and her rich luxuriant hair fell upon my cheek. What a devil of a thing is proximity to a downy cheek and a black eyelash, more especially when they belong to one whom you are disposed to believe not indifferent to you! What I did at this precise moment there is no necessity for recording, even had not an adage interdicted such confessions. nor can I now remember what I said; but I can well recollect how, gradually warming with my subject, I entered into a kind of half-declaration of attachment, intended most honestly to be a mere *exposé* of my own unworthiness to win her favor, and my resolution to leave Lisbon and its neighborhood forever.

Let not any one blame me rashly if he has not experienced the difficulty of my position. The impetus of love-making is like the ardor of a fox-hunt. You care little that the six-bar gate before you is the boundary of another gentleman's preserves or the fence of his pleasure-ground. You go slap along at a smashing-pace, with your head up, and your hand low, clearing all before you, the opposing difficulties to your progress giving half the zest, because all the danger to your career. So it is with love; the gambling spirit urges one ever onward, and the chance of failure is a reason for pursuit, where no other argument exists.

"And you do love me?" said the senhora, with a soft, low whisper that most unaccountably suggested anything but comfort to me.

"Love you, Inez? By this kiss — I'm in an infernal scrape!" said I, muttering this last half of my sentence to myself.

"And you'll never be jealous again?"

"Never, by all that's lovely! — your own sweet lips. That's the very last thing to reproach me with."

"And you promise me not to mind that foolish boy? For, after all, you know, it was mere flirtation, — if even that."

"I'll never think of him again," said I, while my brain was burning to make out her meaning. "But, dearest, there goes the trumpet-call — "

"And, as for Pedro Mascarenhas, I never liked him."

"Are you quite sure, Inez?"

"I swear it! — so no more of him. Gonzales Cordenza — I've broke with him long since. So that you see, dearest Frederic — "

"Frederic!" said I, starting almost to my feet with amazement, while she continued: —

"I'm your own, — all your own!"

"Oh, the coquette, the heartless jilt!" groaned I, half-aloud. "And O'Malley, Inez, poor Charley! — what of him?"

"Poor thing! I can't help him. But he's such a puppy, the lesson may do him good."

"But perhaps he loved you, Inez?"

"To be sure he did; I wished him to do so, — I can't bear not to be loved. But, Frederic, tell me, may I trust you, — will you keep faithful to me?"

"Sweetest Inez! by this last kiss I swear that such as I kneel before you now, you'll ever find me."

A foot upon the gravel-walk without now called me to my feet; I sprang towards the door, and before Inez had lifted her head from the sofa, I had reached the garden. A figure muffled in a cavalry cloak passed near me, but without noticing me, and the next moment I had cleared the paling, and was hurrying towards the stable, where I had ordered Mike to be in waiting.

The faint streak of dull pink which announces the coming day stretched beneath the dark clouds of the night, and the chill air of the morning was already stirring in the leaves.

As I passed along by a low beech hedge which skirted the avenue, I was struck by the sound of voices near me. I stopped to listen, and soon detected in one of the speakers my friend Mickey Free; of the other I was not long in ignorance.

"Love you, is it, bathershin? It's worship you, adore you, my darling, — that's the word! There, acushla, don't cry; dry your eyes — Oh, murther, it's a cruel thing to tear one's self away from the best of living, with the run of the house in drink and kissing! Bad luck to it for campaigning, any way, I never liked it!"

Catrina's reply, — for it was she, — I could not gather; but Mike resumed: —

"Ay, just so, sore bones and wet grass, *accadenté*, and half-rations. Oh, that I ever saw the day when I took to it! Listen to me now, honey; here it is, on my knees I am before you, and throth it's not more nor three, may be four, young women I'd say the like to; bad scran to me if I would n't marry you out of a face this blessed morning just as soon as I'd look at ye. Arrah, there now, don't be screeching and bawling; what'll the neighbors think of us, and my own heart's destroyed with grief entirely."

Poor Catrina's voice returned an inaudible answer, and not wishing any longer to play the eavesdropper, I continued my path towards the stable. The distant noises from the city announced a state of movement and preparation, and more than one orderly passed the road near me at a gallop. As I turned into the wide courtyard, Mike, breathless and flurried with running, overtook me.

"Are the horses ready, Mike?" said I; "we must start this instant?"

"They 've just finished a peck of oats apiece, and faix, that same may be a stranger to them this day six months."

"And the baggage, too?"

"On the cars, with the staff and the light brigade. It was down there I was now, to see all was right."

"Oh, I 'm quite aware; and now bring out the cattle. I hope Catrina received your little consolations well. That seems a very sad affair."

"Murder, real murder, devil a less! It 's no matter where you go, from Clonmel to Chayney, it 's all one; they 've a way of getting round you. Upon my soul, it 's like the pigs they are."

"Like pigs, Mike? That appears a strange compliment you 've selected to pay them."

"Ay, just like the pigs, no less. May be you 've heard what happened to myself up at Moronha?"

"Look to that girth there. Well, go on."

"I was coming along one morning, just as day was beginning to break, when I sees a slip of a pig trotting before me, with nobody near him; but as the road was lonely, and myself rather down in heart, I thought, Musha! but yer fine company, anyhow, av a body could only keep you with him. But, ye see, a pig — saving your presence — is a baste not easily flattered, so I did n't waste time and blarney upon him, but I took off my belt, and put it round its neck as neat as need be; but, as the devil's luck would have it, I did n't go half an hour when a horse came galloping up behind me. I turned round, and, by the blessed light, it was Sir Dinny himself was on it!"

"Sir Dennis Pack?"

"Yes, bad luck to his hook nose. 'What are you doing there, my fine fellow?' says he. 'What's that you have dragging there behind you?'

"'A boneen, sir,' says I. 'Is n't he a fine crayture?—av he was n't so troublesome.'

"'Troublesome, troublesome — what do you mean?'

"'Just so,' says I. 'Is n't he parsecuting the life out of me the whole morning, following me about everywhere I go? Contrary bastes they always was.'

"'I advise you to try and part company, my friend, notwithstanding,' says he; 'or may be it's the same end you'll be coming to, and not long either.' And faix, I took his advice; and ye see, Mister Charles, it's just as I was saying, they're like the women, the least thing in life is enough to bring them after us, *av ye only put the 'comether'* upon them."

"And now adieu to the Villa Nuova," said I, as I rode slowly down the avenue, turning ever and anon in my saddle to look back on each well-known spot.

A heavy sigh from Mike responded to my words.

"A long, a last farewell!" said I, waving my hand towards the trellised walls, now half-hidden by the trees; and, as I spoke, that heaviness of the heart came over me that seems inseparable from leave-taking. The hour of parting seems like a warning to us that all our enjoyments and pleasures here are destined to a short and merely fleeting existence; and as each scene of life passes away never to return, we are made to feel that youth and hope are passing with them; and that, although the fair world be as bright, and its pleasures as rich in abundance, our capacity of enjoyment is daily, hourly diminishing; and while all around us smiles in beauty and happiness, that we, alas! are not what we were.

Such was the tenor of my thoughts as I reached the road, when they were suddenly interrupted by my man Mike, whose meditations were following a somewhat similar channel, though at last inclining to different conclusions. He coughed a couple of times as if to attract my attention, and then, as it were half thinking aloud, he muttered,—

"I wonder if we treated the young ladies well, anyhow, Mister Charles, for, faix, I've my doubts on it."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LINES.

When we reached Lescas, we found that an officer of Lord Wellington's staff had just arrived from the lines, and was occupied in making known the general order from headquarters; which set forth, with customary brevity, that the French armies, under the command of Massena, had retired from their position, and were in full retreat, — the second and third corps, which had been stationed at Villa Franca, having marched, during the night of the 15th, in the direction of Manal. The officers in command of divisions were ordered to repair instantly to Pero Negro, to consult upon a forward movement, Admiral Berkeley being written to to provide launches to pass over General Hill's, or any other corps which might be selected, to the left bank of the Tagus. All now was excitement, heightened by the unexpected nature of an occurrence which not even speculation had calculated upon. It was but a few days before, and the news had reached Torres Vedras that a powerful reinforcement was in march to join Messena's army, and their advanced guard had actually reached Santarem. The confident expectation was, therefore, that an attack upon the lines was meditated. Now, however, this prospect existed no longer; for scarcely had the heavy mists of the lowering day disappeared, when the vast plain, so lately peopled by the thickened ranks and dark masses of a great army, was seen in its whole extent deserted and untenanted.

The smouldering fires of the pickets alone marked where the troops had been posted, but not a man of that immense force was to be seen. General Fane, who had been despatched with a brigade of Portuguese cavalry and some artillery, hung upon the rear of the retiring army, and from him we learned that the enemy were continuing their retreat northward, having occupied Santarem with a strong force to cover the movement. Crawfurd was ordered to the front with the light division, the whole army following in the same direction, except Hill's corps, which, crossing the river at Velada, was intended to harass the enemy's flank, and assist our future operations.

Such, in brief, was the state of affairs when I reached Villa Franca towards noon, and received orders to join my regiment, then forming part of Sir Stapleton Cotton's brigade.

It must be felt to be thoroughly appreciated, the enthusiastic pleasure with which one greets his old corps after some months of separation: the bounding ecstasy with which the weary eye rests on the old familiar faces, dear by every association of affection and brotherhood; the anxious look for this one and for that; the thrill of delight sent through the heart as the well-remembered march swells upon the ear; the very notes of that rough voice which we have heard amidst the crash of battle and the rolling of artillery, speak softly to our senses like a father's welcome; from the well-tattered flag that waves above us to the proud steed of the war-worn trumpeter, each has a niche in our affection.

If ever there was a corps calculated to increase and foster these sentiments, the 14th Light Dragoons was such. The warm affection, the truly heart-felt regard, which existed among my brother officers, made of our mess a happy home. Our veteran colonel, grown gray in campaigning, was like a father to us; while the senior officers, tempering the warm blood of impetuous youth with their hard-won experience, threw a charm of peace and tranquillity over all our intercourse that made us happy when together, and taught us to feel that, whether seated around the watch-fire or charging amidst the squadrons of the enemy, we were surrounded by those devoted heart and soul to aid us.

Gallant Fourteenth! — ever first in every gay scheme of youthful jollity, as foremost in the van to meet the foe — how happy am I to recall the memory of your bright looks and bold hearts; of your manly daring and your bold frankness; of your merry voices, as I have heard them in the battle or in the bivouac! Alas and alas, that I should indulge such recollections alone! How few — how very few — are left of those with whom I trod the early steps of life, whose bold cheer I have heard above the clashing sabres of the enemy, whose broken voice I have listened to above the grave of a comrade! The dark pines of the Pyrenees wave above some, the burning sands of India cover others, and the wide plains of Salamanca are the abiding-place of still more.

"Here comes O'Malley!" shouted a well-known voice, as I rode down the little slope at the foot of which a group of officers were standing beside their horses.

"Welcome, thou man of Galway!" cried Hampden; "delighted to have you once more among us. How confoundedly well the fellow is looking!"

"Lisbon beef seems better prog than commissariat biscuit!" said another.

"A' weel, Charley?" said my friend the Scotch doctor; "how 's a' wi' ye man? Ye seem to thrive on your mishaps! How cam' ye by that braw beastie ye 're mounted on?"

"A present, Doctor; the gift of a very warm friend."

"I hope you invited him to the mess, O'Malley! For, by Jove, our stables stand in need of his kind offices! There he goes! Look at him! What a slashing pace for a heavy fellow!" This observation was made with reference to a well-known officer on the commander-in-chief's staff, whose weight — some two and twenty stone — never was any inpediment to his bold riding.

"Egad, O'Malley, you 'll soon be as pretty a light-weight as our friend yonder. Ah, there 's a storm going on there! Here comes the colonel!"

"Well, O'Malley, are you come back to us? Happy to see you, boy! Hope we shall not lose you again in a hurry! We can't spare the scapegraces! There 's plenty of skirmishing going on! Crawfurd always asks for the scapegraces for the pickets!"

I shook my gallant colonel's hand, while I acknowledged, as best I might, his ambiguous compliment.

"I say, lads," resumed the colonel, "squad your men and form on the road! Lord Wellington 's coming down this way to have a look at you! O'Malley, I have General Crawfurd's orders to offer you your old appointment on his staff; without you prefer to remaining with the regiment!"

"I can never be sufficiently grateful, sir, to the general: but, in fact — I think — that is, I believe —"

"You 'd rather be among your own fellows. Out with it boy! I like you all the better! But come, we must n't let the general know that; so that I shall forget to tell you all about it. Eh, is n't that best? But join your troop now; I hear the staff coming this way."

As he spoke, a crowd of horseman were seen advancing towards us at a sharp trot, their waving plumes and gorgeous aiguillettes denoting their rank as generals of division. In the midst, as they came nearer, I could distinguish one whom once seen there was no forgetting; his plain blue frock and gray trousers, unstrapped beneath his boots, not a little unlike the trim accuracy of costume around him. As he rode to the head of the leading squadron, the staff fell back and he stood alone before us; for a second there was a dead silence, but the next instant — by what impulse tell who can — one tremendous cheer burst from the entire regiment. It was like the act of one man; so sudden, so spontaneous. While every cheek glowed, and every eye sparkled with enthusiasm, he alone seemed cool and unexcited, as, gently raising his hand, he motioned them to silence.

"Fourteenth, you are to be where you always desire to be, — in the advanced guard of the army. I have nothing to say on the subject of your conduct in the field. I know *you;* but if in pursuit of the enemy, I hear of any misconduct towards the people of the country, or any transgression of the general orders regarding pillage, by G ——, I 'll punish you as severely as the worst corps in the service, and you know *me!*"

"Oh, tear an ages, listen to that; and there 's to be no plunder after all!" said Mickey Free; and for an instant the most I could do was not to burst into a fit of laughter. The word, "Forward!" was given at the moment, and we moved past in close column, while that penetrating eye, which seemed to read our very thoughts, scanned us from one end of the line to the other.

"I say, Charley," said the captain of my troop, in a whisper, — "I say, that confounded cheer we gave got us that lesson; he can't stand that kind of thing."

"By Jove! I never felt more disposed than to repeat it," said I.

"No, no, my boy, we 'll give him the honors, nine times nine; but wait till evening. Look at old Merivale there. I 'll swear he 's saying something devilish civil to him. Do you see the old fellow's happy look?"

And so it was; the bronzed, hard-cast features of the veteran soldier were softened into an expression of almost boyish delight, as he sat, bare-headed, bowing to his very saddle, while Lord Wellington was speaking.

As I looked, my heart throbbed painfully against my side, my breath came quick, and I muttered to myself, "What would I not give to be in his place now!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE RETREAT OF THE FRENCH.

It is not my intention, were I even adequate to the task, to trace with anything like accuracy the events of the war at this period. In fact, to those who, like myself, were performing a mere subaltern character, the daily movements of our own troops, not to speak of the continual changes of the enemy, were perfectly unknown, and an English newspaper was more ardently longed for in the Peninsula than by the most eager crowd of a London coffee-room; nay, the results of the very engagements we were ourselves concerned in, more than once, first reached us through the press of our own country. It is easy enough to understand this. The officer in command of the regiment, and how much more, the captain of a troop, or the subaltern under him, knows nothing beyond the sphere of his own immediate duty; by the success or failure of his own party his knowledge is bounded, but how far he or his may influence the fortune of the day, or of what is taking place elsewhere, he is totally ignorant; and an old Fourteenth man did not badly explain his ideas on the matter, who described Busaco as "a great noise and a great smoke, booming artillery and rattling small-arms, infernal confusion, and to all seeming, incessant blundering, orders and counter-orders, ending with a crushing charge; when, not being hurt himself, nor having hurt anybody, he felt much pleased to learn that they had gained a victory." It is then sufficient for all the purposes of my narrative, when I mention that Massena continued his retreat by Santarem and Thomar, followed by the allied army, who, however desirous of pressing upon the rear of their enemy, were still obliged to maintain their communication with the lines, and also to watch the movement of the large armies which, under Ney and Soult, threatened at any unguarded moment to attack them in flank.

The position which Massena occupied at Santarem, naturally one of great strength, and further improved by intrenchments, defied any attack on the part of Lord Wellington, until the arrival of the long-expected reinforcements from England. These had sailed in the early part of January, but delayed by adverse winds, only reached Lisbon on the 2d of March; and so correctly was the French marshal apprised of the circumstance, and so accurately did he anticipate the probable result, that on the fourth he broke up his encampment, and recommenced his retrograde movement, with an army now reduced to forty thousand fighting men, and with two thousand sick, destroying all his baggage and guns that could not be horsed. By a demonstration of advancing upon the Zezere, by which he held the allies in check, he succeeded in passing his wounded to the rear, while Ney, appearing with a large force suddenly at Leiria, seemed bent upon attacking the lines. By these stratagems two days' march were gained, and the French retreated upon Torres Novas and Thomar, destroying the bridges behind them as they passed.

The day was breaking on the 12th of March, when the British first came in sight of the retiring enemy. We were then ordered to the front, and broken up into small parties, threw out our skirmishers. The French chasseurs, usually not indisposed to accept this species of encounter, showed now less of inclination than usual, and either retreated before us, or hovered in masses to check our advance; in this way the morning was passed, when towards noon we perceived that the enemy was drawn up in battle array, occupying the height above the village of Redinha. This little straggling village is situated in a hollow traversed by a narrow causeway which opens by a long and dangerous defile upon a bridge, on either side of which a dense wood afforded a shelter for light troops, while upon the commanding eminence above a battery of heavy guns was seen in position.

In front of the village a brigade of artillery and a division of infantry were drawn up so skilfully as to give the appearance of a considerable force, so that when Lord Wellington came up he spent some time in examining the enemy's position. Erskine's brigade was immediately ordered up, and the Fifty-second and Ninety-fourth, and a company of the Forty-third were led against the wooded slopes upon the French right. Picton simultaneously attacked the left, and in less than an hour, both were successful, and Ney's position was laid bare; his skirmishers, however, continued to hold their ground in front, and La Ferrière, a colonel of hussars, dashing boldly forward at this very moment, carried off fourteen prisoners from the very front of our line. Deceived by the confidence of the enemy, Lord Wellington now prepared for an attack in force. The infantry were therefore formed into line, and, at the signal of three shots fired from the centre, began their foremost movement.

Bending up a gentle curve, the whole plain glistened with the glancing bayonets, and the troops marched majestically onward; while the light artillery and the cavalry, bounding forward from the left and centre, rushed eagerly towards the foe. One deafening discharge from the French guns opened at the moment, with a general volley of small-arms. The smoke for an instant obscured everything, and when that cleared away, no enemy was to be seen.

The British pressed madly on, like heated bloodhounds; but when they descended the slope, the village of Redinha was in flames, and the French in full retreat beyond it. A single howitzer seemed our only trophy, and even this we were not destined to boast of, for from the midst of the crashing flame and dense smoke of the burning village, a troop of dragoons rushed forward, and charging our infantry, carried it off. The struggle, though but for a moment, cost them dear: twenty of their comrades lay dead upon the spot; but they were resolute and determined, and the officer who led them on, fighting hand to hand with a soldier of the Forty-second, cheered them as they retired. His gallant bearing, and his coat covered with decorations, bespoke him one of note, and well it might; he who thus perilled his life to maintain the courage of his soldiers at the commencement of a retreat, was none other than Ney himself, *le plus brave des braves.* The British pressed hotly on, and the light troops crossed the river almost at the same time with the French. Ney, however, fell back upon Condeixa, where his main body was posted, and all farther pursuit was for the present abandoned.

At Casa Noval and at Foz d'Aronce, the allies were successful; but the French still continued to retire, burning the towns and villages in their rear, and devastating the country along the whole line of march by every expedient of cruelty the heart of man has ever conceived. In the words of one whose descriptions, however fraught with the most wonderful power of painting, are equally marked by truth, "Every horror that could make war hideous attended this dreadful march. Distress, conflagration, death in all modes, — from wounds, from fatigue, from water, from the flames, from starvation, — vengeance, unlimited vengeance, was on every side." The country was a desert!

Such was the exhaustion of the allies, who suffered even greater privations than the enemy, that they halted upon the 16th, unable to proceed farther; and the river Ceira, swollen and unfordable, flowed between the rival armies.

The repose of even one day was a most grateful interruption to the harassing career we had pursued for some time past; and it seemed that my comrades felt, like myself, that such an opportunity was by no means to be neglected; but while I am devoting so much space and trespassing on my reader's patience thus far with narrative of flood and field, let me steal a chapter for what will sometimes seem a scarcely less congenial topic, and bring back the recollection of a glorious night in the Peninsula.

CHAPTER XXI.

PATRICK'S DAY IN THE PENINSULA.

The *réveil* had not yet sounded, when I felt my shoulder shaken gently as I lay wrapped up in my cloak beneath a prickly pear-tree.

"Lieutenant O'Malley, sir; a letter, sir; a bit of a note, your honor," said a voice that bespoke the bearer and myself were countrymen. I opened it, and with difficulty, by the uncertain light, read as follows: —

Dear Charley, — As Lord Wellington, like a good Irishman as he is, would n't spoil Patrick's Day by marching, we 've got a little dinner at our quarters to celebrate the holy times, as my uncle would call it. Maurice, Phil Grady, and some regular trumps will all come, so don't disappoint us. I 've been making punch all night, and Casey, who has a knack at pastry, has made a goose-pie as big as a portmanteau. Sharp seven, after parade. The second battalion of the Fusiliers are quartered at Melanté, and we are next them. Bring any of yours worth their liquor. Power is, I know, absent with the staff; perhaps the Scotch doctor would come; try him. Carry over a little mustard with you, if there be such in your parts.

Yours,

D. O'Shaughnessy.

Patrick's day, and raining like blazes.

Seeing that the bearer expected an answer, I scrawled the words, "I 'm there," with my pencil on the back of the note, and again turned myself round to sleep. My slumbers were, however, soon interrupted once more; for the bugles of the light infantry and the hoarse trumpet of the cavalry sounded the call, and I found to my surprise that, though halted, we were by no means destined to a day of idleness. Dragoons were already mounted, carrying orders hither and thither, and staff-officers were galloping right and left. A general order commanded an inspection of the troops, and within less than an hour from daybreak the whole army was drawn up under arms. A thin, drizzling rain continued to fall during the early part of the day, but the sun gradually dispelled the heavy vapor; and as the bright verdure glittered in its beams, sending up all the perfumes of a southern clime, I thought I had never seen a more lovely morning. The staff were stationed upon a little knoll beside the river, round the base of which the troops defiled, at first in orderly, then in quick time, the bands playing and the colors flying. In the same brigade with us the Eighty-eighth came, and as they neared the commander-in-chief, their quick-step was suddenly stopped, and after a pause of a few seconds, the band struck up "St. Patrick's Day;" the notes were caught up by the other Irish regiments, and amidst one prolonged cheer from the whole line, the gallant fellows moved past.

The grenadier company were drawn up beside the road, and I was not long in detecting my friend O'Shaughnessy, who wore a tremendous shamrock in his shako.

"Left face, wheel! Quick march! Don't forget the mustard!" said the bold major; and a loud roar of laughing from my brother officers followed him off the ground. I soon explained the injunction, and having invited some three or four to accompany me to the dinner, waited with all patience for the conclusion of the parade.

The sun was setting as I mounted, and joined by Hampden, Baker, the doctor, and another, set out for O'Shaughnessy's quarters. As we rode along, we were continually falling in with others bent upon the same errand as ourselves, and ere we arrived at Melanté our party was some thirty strong; and truly a most extraordinary procession did we form. Few of the invited came without some contribution to the general stock; and while a staff-officer flourished a ham, a smart hussar might be seen with a plucked turkey, trussed for roasting; most carried bottles, as the consumption of fluid was likely to be considerable; and one fat old major jogged along on a broken-winded pony, with a basket of potatoes on his arm. Good fellowship was the order of the day, and certainly a more jovial squadron seldom was met together than ours. As we turned the angle of a rising ground, a hearty cheer greeted us, and we beheld in front of an old ordnance marquee a party of some fifty fellows engaged in all the pleasing duties of the *cuisine*. Maurice, conspicuous above all, with a white apron and a ladle in his hand, was running hither and thither, advising, admonishing, instructing, and occasionally imprecating. Ceasing for a second his functions, he gave us a cheer and a yell like that of an Indian savage, and then resumed his duties beside a huge boiler, which, from the frequency of his explorations into its contents, we judged to be punch.

"Charley, my son, I 've a place for you; don't forget. Where 's my learned brother? — have n't you brought him with you? Ah, Doctor, how goes it?"

"Nae that bad, Master Quell: a' things considered, we 've had an awfu' time of it lately."

"You know my friend Hampden, Maurice. Let me introduce Mr. Baker, Mr. Maurice Quill. Where 's the major?"

"Here I am, my darling, and delighted to see you. Some of yours, O'Malley, ain't they? Proud to have you, gentlemen. Charley, we are obliged to have several tables; but you are to be beside Maurice, so take your friends with you. There goes the 'Roast Beef;' my heart warms to that old tune."

Amidst a hurried recognition, and shaking of hands on every side, I elbowed my way into the tent, and soon reached a corner, where, at a table for eight, I found Maurice seated at one end; a huge, purple-faced old major, whom he presented to us as Bob Mahon, occupied the other. O'Shaughnessy presided at the table next to us, but near enough to join in all the conviviality of ours.

One must have lived for some months upon hard biscuit and harder beef to relish as we did the fare before us, and to form an estimate of our satisfaction. If the reader cannot fancy Van Amburgh's lions in red coats and epaulettes, he must be content to lose the effect of the picture. A turkey rarely fed more than two people, and few were abstemious enough to be satisfied with one chicken. The order of the viands, too, observed no common routine, each party being happy to get what he could, and satisfied to follow up his pudding with fish, or his tart with a sausage. Sherry, champagne, London porter, Malaga, and even, I believe, Harvey's sauce were hobnobbed in, while hot punch, in teacups or tin vessels, was unsparingly distributed on all sides. Achilles himself, they say, got tired of eating, and though he consumed something like a prize ox to his own cheek, he at length had to call for cheese, so that we at last gave in, and having cleared away the broken tumbrels and baggage-carts of our army, cleared for a general action.

"Now, lads!" cried the major, "I'm not going to lose your time and mine by speaking; but there are a couple of toasts I must insist upon your drinking with all the honors; and as I like despatch, we'll couple them. It so happens that our old island boasts of two of the finest fellows that ever wore Russia ducks. None of your nonsensical geniuses, like poets or painters or anything like that; but downright, straightforward, no-humbug sort of devil-may-care and bad-luck-to-you kind of chaps, — real Irishmen! Now, it's a strange thing that they both had such an antipathy to vermin, they spent their life in hunting them down and destroying them; and whether they met toads at home or Johnny Crapaud abroad, it was all one. [Cheers.] Just so, boys; they made them leave that; but I see you are impatient, so I'll not delay you, but fill to the brim, and with the best cheer in your body, drink with me the two greatest Irishmen that ever lived, 'Saint Patrick and Lord Wellington.'"

The Englishmen laughed long and loud, while we cheered with an energy that satisfied even the major.

"Who is to give us the chant? Who is to sing Saint Patrick?" cried Maurice. "Come, Bob, out with it."

"I 'm four tumblers too low for that yet," growled out the major.

"Well, then, Charley, be you the man; or why not Dennis himself? Come, Dennis, we cannot better begin our evening than with a song; let us have our old friend 'Larry M'Hale.'"

"Larry M'Hale!" resounded from all parts of the room, while O'Shaughnessy rose once more to his legs.

"Faith, boys, I 'm always ready to follow your lead; but what analogy can exist between 'Larry M'Hale' and the toast we have just drank I can't see for the life of me; not but Larry would have made a strapping light company man had he joined the army."

"The song, the song!" cried several voices.

"Well, if you will have it, here goes:" —

LARRY M'HALE.

AIR, — "*It 's a bit of a thing,*" *etc.*

Oh, Larry M'Hale he had little to fear,
And never could want when the crops did n't fail;
He 'd a house and demesne and eight hundred a year,
And the heart for to spend it, had Larry M'Hale!
The soul of a party, the life of a feast,
And an illigant song he could sing, I 'll be bail;
He would ride with the rector, and drink with the priest,
Oh, the broth of a boy was old Larry M'Hale!

It 's little he cared for the judge or recorder,
His house was as big and as strong as a jail;
With a cruel four-pounder, he kept in great order,
He 'd murder the country, would Larry M'Hale.
He 'd a blunderbuss too, of horse-pistols a pair;
But his favorite weapon was always a flail.
I wish you could see how he 'd empty a fair,
For he handled it neatly, did Larry M'Hale.

His ancestors were kings before Moses was born,
His mother descended from great Grana Uaile ;
He laughed all the Blakes and the Frenches to scorn ;
They were mushrooms compared to old Larry M'Hale.
He sat down every day to a beautiful dinner,
With cousins and uncles enough for a tail ;
And, though loaded with debt, oh, the devil a thinner,
Could law or the sheriff make Larry M'Hale !

With a larder supplied and a cellar well stored,
None lived half so well, from Fair-Head to Kinsale,
As he piously said, "I 've a plentiful board,
And the Lord he is good to old Larry M'Hale."
So fill up your glass, and a high bumper give him,
It 's little we 'd care for the tithes or repale ;
For ould Erin would be a fine country to live in,
If we only had plenty like LARRY M'HALE.

"Very singular style of person your friend Mr. M'Hale," lisped a spooney-looking cornet at the end of the table.

"Not in the country he belongs to, I assure you," said Maurice ; "but I presume you were never in Ireland."

"You are mistaken there," resumed the other ; "I was in Ireland, though I confess not for a long time."

"If I might be so bold," cried Maurice, "how long ?"

"Half an hour, by a stop-watch," said the other, pulling up his stock ; "and I had quite enough of it in that time."

"Pray give us your experiences," cried out Bob Mahon ; "they should be interesting, considering your opportunities."

"You are right," said the cornet ; "they were so ; and as they illustrate a feature in your amiable country, you shall have them."

A general knocking upon the table announced the impatience of the company, and when silence was restored the cornet began : —

"When the 'Bermuda' transport sailed from Portsmouth for Lisbon, I happened to make one of some four hundred interesting individuals who, before they became food for powder, were destined to try their constitutions on pickled pork. The second day after our sailing, the winds became adverse ; it blew a hurricane from every corner of the compass but the one it ought, and the good ship, that should have been standing straight for the Bay of Biscay, was scudding away under a double-reefed topsail towards the coast of Labrador. For six days we experienced every sea-manœuvre that usually preludes a shipwreck, and at length, when, what from sea-sickness and fear, we had become utterly indifferent to the result, the storm abated, the sea went down, and we found ourselves lying comfortably in the harbor of Cork, with a strange suspicion on our minds that the frightful scenes of the past week had been nothing but a dream.

"'Come, Mr. Medlicot,' said the skipper to me, 'we shall be here for a couple of days to refit; had you not better go ashore and see the country?'

"I sprang to my legs with delight; visions of cowslips, larks, daisies, and mutton-chops floated before my excited imagination, and in ten minutes I found myself standing at that pleasant little inn at Cove which, opposite Spike Island, rejoices in the name of the 'Goat and Garters.'

"'Breakfast, waiter,' said I; 'a beefsteak, — fresh beef, mark ye, — fresh eggs, bread, milk, and butter, all fresh. No more hard tack,' thought I; 'no salt butter, but a genuine land breakfast.'

"'Up-stairs, No. 4, sir,' said the waiter, as he flourished a dirty napkin, indicating the way.

"Up-stairs I went, and in due time the appetizing little meal made its appearance. Never did a minor's eye revel over his broad acres with more complacent enjoyment than did mine skim over the mutton and the muffin, the teapot, the trout, and the devilled kidney, so invitingly spread out before me. 'Yes,' thought I, as I smacked my lips, 'this is the reward of virtue; pickled pork is a probationary state that admirably fits us for future enjoyments.' I arranged my napkin upon my knee, seized my knife and fork, and proceeded with most critical acumen to bisect a beefsteak. Scarcely, however, had I touched it, when, with a loud crash, the plate smashed beneath it, and the gravy ran piteously across the cloth. Before I had time to account for the phenomenon, the door opened hastily, and the waiter rushed into the room, his face beaming with smiles, while he rubbed his hands in an ecstasy of delight.

"'It's all over, sir,' said he; 'glory be to God! it's all done.'

"'What's over? What's done?' inquired I, with impatience.

"'Mr. M'Mahon is satisfied,' replied he, 'and so is the other gentleman.'

"'Who and what the devil do you mean?'

"'It's over, sir, I say,' replied the waiter again; 'he fired in the air.'

"'Fired in the air! Was there a duel in the room below stairs?'

"'Yes, sir,' said the waiter, with a benign smile.

"'That will do,' said I, as seizing my hat, I rushed out of the house, and hurrying to the beach, took a boat for the ship. Exactly half an hour had elapsed since my landing, but even those short thirty minutes had fully as many reasons that although there may be few more amusing, there are some safer places to live in than the Green Isle."

A general burst of laughter followed the cornet's story, which was heightened in its effect by the gravity with which he told it.

"And after all," said Maurice Quill, "now that people have given up making fortunes for the insurance companies by living to the age of Methuselah, there's nothing like being an Irishman. In what other part of the habitable globe can you cram so much adventure into one year? Where can you be so often in love, in liquor, or in debt; and where can you get so merrily out of the three? Where are promises to marry and promises to pay treated with the same gentleman-like forbearance; and where, when you have lost your heart and your fortune, are people found so ready to comfort you in your reverses? Yes," said Maurice, as he filled his glass up to the brim, and eyed it lusciously for a moment, — "yes, darling, here's your health; the only girl I ever loved — in that part of the country, I mean. Give her a bumper, lads, and I'll give you a chant."

"Name! name! name!" shouted several voices from different parts of the table.

"Mary Draper!" said Maurice, filling his glass once more, while the name was re-echoed by every lip at table.

"The song! the song!"

"Faith, I hope I have n't forgotten it," quoth Maurice. "No; here it is."

So saying, after a couple of efforts to assure the pitch of his voice, the worthy doctor began the following words to that very popular melody, "Nancy Dawson:" —

MARY DRAPER.

Air, — *Nancy Dawson.*

Don't talk to me of London dames,
Nor rave about your foreign flames,
That never lived, except in drames,
Nor shone, except on paper;
I'll sing you 'bout a girl I knew,
Who lived in Ballywhacmacrew,
And let me tell you, mighty few
Could equal Mary Draper.

Her cheeks were red, her eyes were blue,
Her hair was brown of deepest hue,
Her foot was small, and neat to view,
Her waist was slight and taper;
Her voice was music to your ear,
A lovely brogue, so rich and clear,
Oh, the like I ne'er again shall hear,
As from sweet Mary Draper.

She'd ride a wall, she 'd drive a team,
Or with a fly she 'd whip a stream,
Or may be sing you "Rousseau's Dream,"
For nothing could escape her;
I 've seen her, too, — upon my word, —
At sixty yards bring down her bird,
Oh, she charmed all the Forty-third,
Did lovely Mary Draper.

And at the spring assizes' ball,
The junior bar would one and all
For all her fav'rite dances call,
And Harry Dean would caper;
Lord Clare would then forget his lore;
King's Counsel, voting law a bore,
Were proud to figure on the floor,
For love of Mary Draper.

The parson, priest, sub-sheriff too,
Were all her slaves, and so would you,
If you had only but one view,
Of such a face and shape, or
Her pretty ankles — But, ohone,
It's only west of old Athlone
Such girls were found — and now they 're gone —
So here 's to Mary Draper!

"So here 's to Mary Draper!" sang out every voice, in such efforts to catch the tune as pleased the taste of the motley assembly.

"For Mary Draper and Co., I thank you," said Maurice. "Quill drinks to Dennis," added he, in a grave tone, as he nodded to O'Shaughnessy. "Yes, Shaugh, few men better than ourselves know these matters; and few have had more experience of the three perils of Irishmen, — love, liquor, and the law of arrest."

"It's little the latter has ever troubled my father's son," replied O'Shaughnessy. "Our family have been writ proof for centuries, and he'd have been a bold man who would have ventured with an original or a true copy within the precincts of Killinahoula."

"Your father had a touch of Larry M'Hale in him," said I, "apparently."

"Exactly so," replied Dennis; "not but they caught him at last, and a scurvy trick it was and well worthy of him who did it! Yes," said he, with a sigh, "it is only another among the many instances where the better features of our nationality have been used by our enemies as instruments for our destruction; and should we seek for the causes of unhappiness in our wretched country, we should find them rather in our virtues than in our vices, and in the bright rather than in the darker phases of our character."

"Metaphysics, by Jove!" cried Quill; "but all true at the same time. There was a mess-mate of mine in the 'Roscommon' who never paid car-hire in his life. 'Head or harp, Paddy!' he would cry. 'Two tenpennies or nothing.' 'Harp, for the honor of ould Ireland!' was the invariable response, and my friend was equally sure to make head come uppermost; and, upon my soul, they seem to know the trick at the Home Office."

"That must have been the same fellow that took my father," cried O'Shaughnessy, with energy.

"Let us hear the story, Dennis," said I.

"Yes," said Maurice, "for the benefit of self and fellows, let us hear the stratagem!"

"The way of it was this," resumed O'Shaughnessy. "My father, who for reasons registered in the King's Bench spent a great many years of his life in that part of Ireland geographically known as lying west of the law, was obliged, for certain reasons of family, to come up to Dublin. This he proceeded to do with due caution. Two trusty servants formed an advance guard, and patrolled the country for at least five miles in advance; after them came a skirmishing body of a few tenants, who, for the consideration of never paying rent, would have charged the whole Court of Chancery, if needful. My father himself, in an old chaise victualled like a fortress, brought up the rear; and as I said before, he were a bold man who would have attempted to have laid siege to him. As the column advanced into the enemy's country, they assumed a closer order, the patrol and the picket falling back upon the main body; and in this way they reached that most interesting city called Kilbeggan. What a fortunate thing it is for us in Ireland that we can see so much of the world without foreign travel, and that any gentleman for six-and-eightpence can leave Dublin in the morning, and visit Timbuctoo against dinner-time. Don't stare! it 's truth I 'm telling; for dirt, misery, smoke, unaffected behavior, and black faces, I 'll back Kilbeggan against all Africa. Free-and-easy, pleasant people ye are, with a skin as begrimed and as rugged as your own potatoes! But, to resume. The sun was just rising in a delicious morning of June, when my father, — whose loyal antipathies I have mentioned made him also an early riser, — was preparing for the road. A stout escort of his followers were as usual under arms to see him safe in the chaise, the passage to and from which every day being the critical moment of my father's life.

" 'It 's all right, your honor,' said his own man, as, armed with a blunderbuss, he opened the bed-room door.

" 'Time enough, Tim,' said my father; 'close the door, for I have n't finished my breakfast.'

"Now, the real truth was, that my father's attention was at that moment withdrawn from his own concerns by a scene which was taking place in a field beneath his window.

"But a few minutes before, a hack-chaise had stopped upon the roadside, out of which sprang three gentlemen, who, proceeding into the field, seemed bent upon something, which, whether a survey or a duel, my father could not make out. He was not long, however, to remain in ignorance. One, with an easy, lounging gait, strode towards a distant corner; another took an opposite direction; while a third, a short, pursy gentleman, in a red handkerchief and rabbit-skin waistcoat, proceeded to open a mahogany box, which, to the critical eyes of my respected father, was agreeably suggestive of bloodshed and murder.

"'A duel, by Jupiter!' said my father, rubbing his hands. 'What a heavenly morning the scoundrels have, — not a leaf stirring, and a sod like a billiard-table!'

"Meanwhile the little man who officiated as second, it would appear to *both* parties, bustled about with an activity little congenial to his shape; and what between snapping the pistols, examining the flints, and ramming down the charges, had got himself into a sufficient perspiration before he commenced to measure the ground.

"'Short distance and no quarter!' shouted one of the combatants, from the corner of the field.

"'Across a handkerchief, if you like!' roared the other.

"'Gentlemen, every inch of them!' responded my father.

"'Twelve paces!' cried the little man. 'No more and no less. Don't forget that I am alone in this business!'

"'A very true remark!' observed my father; 'and an awkward predicament yours will be if they are not both shot!'

"By this time the combatants had taken their places, and the little man, having delivered the pistols, was leisurely retiring to give the word. My father, however, whose critical eye was never at fault, detected a circumstance which promised an immense advantage to one at the expense of the other; in fact, one of the parties was so placed with his back to the sun, that his shadow extended in a straight line to the very foot of his antagonist.

"'Unfair, unfair!' cried my father, opening the window as he spoke, and addressing himself to him of the rabbit-skin. 'I crave your pardon for the interruption,' said he; 'but I feel bound to observe that that gentleman's shadow is likely to make a shade of him.'

"'And so it is,' observed the short man; 'a thousand thanks for your kindness, but the truth is, I am totally unaccustomed to this kind of thing, and the affair will not admit of delay.'

"'Not an hour!' said one.

"'No, not five minutes!' growled the other of the combatants.

"'Put them up north and south,' said my father.

"'Is it thus?'

"'Exactly so. But now, again, the gentleman in the brown coat is covered with the ash-tree.'

"'And so he is!' said rabbit-skin, wiping his forehead with agitation.

"'Move them a little to the left,' said he.

"'That brings me upon an eminence,' said the gentleman in blue. 'I'll be d—d if I be made a cock shot of!'

"'What an awkward little thief it is in the hairy waistcoat!' said my father; 'he's lucky if he don't get shot himself!'

"'May I never, if I'm not sick of you both!' ejaculated rabbit-skin, in a passion. 'I've moved you round every point of the compass, and the devil a nearer we are than ever!'

"'Give us the word,' said one.

"'The word!'

"'Downright murder,' said my father.

"'I don't care,' said the little man; 'we shall be here till doomsday.'

"'I can't permit this,' said my father; 'allow me.' So saying, he stepped upon the window-sill, and leaped down into the field.

"'Before I can accept of your politeness,' said he of the rabbit-skin, 'may I beg to know your name and position in society?'

"'Nothing more reasonable,' said my father. 'I'm Miles O'Shaughnessy, Colonel of the Royal Raspers, — here is my card.'

"The piece of pasteboard was complacently handed from one to the other of the party, who saluted my father with a smile of most courteous benignity.

"'Colonel O'Shaughnessy,' said one.

"'Miles O'Shaughnessy,' said the other.

"'Of Killinahoula Castle,' said the third.

"'At your service,' said my father, bowing, as he presented his snuff-box; 'and now to business, if you please, for my time also is limited.'

"'Very true,' observed he of the rabbit-skin; 'and, as you observe, now to business; in virtue of which, Colonel Miles O'Shaughnessy, I hereby arrest you in the King's name. Here is the writ; it's at the suit of Barnaby Kelly, of Loughrea, for the sum of £1,482 19*s.* 7½*d.*, which — '

"Before he could conclude the sentence, my father discharged one obligation by implanting his closed knuckles in his face. The blow, well aimed and well intentioned, sent the little fellow summersetting like a sugar hogshead. But, alas! it was of no use; the others, strong and able-bodied, fell both upon him, and after a desperate struggle succeeded in getting him down. To tie his hands, and convey him to the chaise, was the work of a few moments; and as my father drove by the inn, the last object which caught his view was a bloody encounter between his own people and the myrmidons of the law, who, in great numbers, had laid siege to the house during his capture. Thus was my father taken; and thus, in reward for yielding to a virtuous weakness in his character, was he consigned to the ignominious durance of a prison. Was I not right, then, in saying that such is the melancholy position of our country, the most beautiful traits in our character are converted into the elements of our ruin?"

"I dinna think ye ha'e made out your case, Major?" said the Scotch doctor, who felt sorely puzzled at my friend's logic. "If your faether had na gi'en the bond — "

"There is no saying what he would n't have done to the bailiffs," interrupted Dennis, who was following up a very different train of reasoning.

"I fear me, Doctor," observed Quill, "you are much behind us in Scotland. Not but that some of your chieftains are respectable men, and would n't get on badly even in Galway."

"I thank ye muckle for the compliment," said the doctor, dryly; "but I ha'e my doubts they 'd think it ane, and they 're crusty carls that 's no' ower safe to meddle wi'."

"I 'd as soon propose a hand of 'spoiled five' to the Pope of Rome, as a joke to one of them," returned Maurice.

"May be ye are na wrang there, Maister Quell."

"Well," cried Hampden, "if I may be allowed an opinion, I can safely aver I know no quarters like Scotland. Edinburgh beyond anything or anywhere I was ever placed in."

"Always after Dublin," interposed Maurice; while a general chorus of voices re-echoed the sentiment.

"You are certainly a strong majority," said my friend, "against me; but still I recant not my original opinion. Edinburgh before the world. For a hospitality that never tires; for pleasant fellows that improve every day of your acquaintance; for pretty girls that make you long for a repeal of the canon about being only singly blessed, and lead you to long for a score of them, Edinburgh, — I say again, before the world."

"Their ankles are devilish thick," whispered Maurice.

"A calumny, a base calumny!"

"And then they drink — "

"Oh — "

"Yes; they drink very strong tea."

"Shall we ha'e a glass o' sherry together, Hampden?" said the Scotch doctor, willing to acknowledge his defence of auld Reekie.

"And we 'll take O'Malley in," said Hampden; "he looks imploringly."

"And now to return to the charge," quoth Maurice. "In what particular dare ye contend the palm with Dublin? We 'll not speak of beauty. I can't suffer any such profane turn in the conversation as to dispute the superiority of Irishwomen's lips, eyes, noses, and eyebrows, to anything under heaven. We 'll not talk of gay fellows; egad, we need n't. I 'll give you the garrison, — a decent present, — and I 'll back the Irish bar for more genuine drollery, more wit, more epigram, more ready sparkling fun, than the whole rest of the empire — ay, and all her colonies — can boast of."

"They are nae remarkable for passing the bottle, if they resemble their very gifted advocate," observed the Scotchman.

"But they are for filling and emptying both, making its current, as it glides by, like a rich stream glittering in the sunbeams with the sparkling lustre of their wit. Lord, how I 'm blown! Fill my pannikin, Charley. There 's no subduing a Scot. Talk with him, drink with him, fight with him, and he 'll always have the last of it; there 's only one way of concluding the treaty — "

"And that is — "

"Blarney him. Lord bless you, he can't stand it! Tell him Holyrood 's like Versailles, and the Trossach 's finer than Mont Blanc; that Geordie Buchanan was Homer, and the Canongate, Herculaneum, — then ye have him on the hip. Now, ye never can humbug an Irishman that way; he 'll know you 're quizzing him when you praise his country."

"Ye are right, Hampden," said the Scotch doctor, in reply to some observation. "We are vara primitive in the Hielands, and we keep to our ain national customs in dress and everything; and we are vara slow to learn, and even when we try we are nae ower successfu' in our imitations, which sometimes cost us dearly enough. Ye may have heard, may be, of the M'Nab o' that ilk, and what happened him with the king's equerry?"

"I 'm not quite certain," said Hampden, "if I ever heard the story."

"It 's nae muckle of a story; but the way of it was this. When Montrose came back from London, he brought with him a few Englishers to show them the Highlands, and let them see something of deer-stalking, — among the rest, a certain Sir George Sowerby, an aide-de-camp or an equerry of the prince. He was a vara fine gentleman, that never loaded his ain gun, and a'most thought it too much trouble to pull the trigger. He went out every morning to shoot with his hair curled like a woman, and dressed like a dancing-master. Now, there happened to be at the same time at the castle the Laird o' M'Nab; he was a kind of cousin of the Montrose, and a rough old tyke of the true Hieland breed, wha' thought that the head of a clan was fully equal to any king or prince. He sat opposite to Sir George at dinner the day of his arrival, and could not conceal his surprise at the many new-fangled ways of feeding himself the Englisher adopted. He ate his saumon wi' his fork in ae hand, and a bittock of bread in the other. He would na touch the whiskey; helped himself to a cutlet wi' his fingers. But what was maist extraordinary of all, he wore a pair o' braw white gloves during the whole time o' dinner and when they came to tak' away the cloth, he drew them off with a great air, and threw them into the middle of it, and then, leisurely taking anither pair off a silver salver which his ain man presented, he pat them on for dessert. The M'Nab, who, although an auld-fashioned carl, was aye fond of bringing something new hame to his friends, remarked the Englisher's proceeding with great care, and the next day he appeared at dinner wi' a huge pair of Hieland mittens, which he wore, to the astonishment of all and the amusement of most, through the whole three courses; and exactly as the Englishman changed his gloves, the M'Nab produced a fresh pair of goats' wool, four times as large as the first, which, drawing on with prodigious gravity, he threw the others into the middle of the cloth, remarking, as he did so, —

"'Ye see, Captain, we are never ower auld to learn.'

"All propriety was now at an end, and a hearty burst of laughter from one end of the table to the other convulsed the whole company, — the M'Nab and the Englishman being the only persons who did not join in it, but sat glowering at each other like twa tigers; and, indeed, it needed, a' the Montrose's interference that they had na quarrelled upon it in the morning."

"The M'Nab was a man after my own heart," said Maurice; "there was something very Irish in the lesson he gave the Englishman."

"I 'd rather ye 'd told him that than me," said the doctor, dryly; "he would na hae thanked ye for mistaking him for ane of your countrymen."

"Come, Doctor," said Dennis, "could not ye give us a stave? Have ye nothing that smacks of the brown fern and the blue lakes in your memory?"

"I have na a sang in my mind just noo except 'Johnny Cope,' which may be might na be ower pleasant for the Englishers to listen to."

"I never heard a Scotch song worth sixpence," quoth Maurice, who seemed bent on provoking the doctor's ire. "They contain nothing save some puling sentimentality about lasses with lint-white locks, or some absurd laudations of the Barley Bree."

"Hear till him, hear till him!" said the doctor, reddening with impatience.

"Show me anything," said Maurice, "like the 'Cruiskeen Lawn' or the 'Jug of Punch;' but who can blame them, after all? You can't expect much from a people with an imagination as naked as their own knees."

"Maurice! Maurice!" cried O'Shaughnessy, reprovingly, who saw that he was pushing the other's endurance beyond all bounds.

"I mind weel," said the Scotchman, "what happened to ane o' your countrymen wha took upon him to jest as you are doing now. It was to Laurie Cameron he did it."

"And what said the redoubted Laurie in reply?"

"He did na say muckle, but he did something."

"And what might it be?" inquired Maurice.

"He threw him ower the brig of Ayr into the water, and he was drowned."

"And did Laurie come to no harm about the matter?"

"Ay, they tried him for it, and found him guilty; but when they asked him what he had to say in his defence, he merely replied, 'When the carl sneered about Scotland, I did na suspect that he did na ken how to swim;' and so the end of it was, they did naething to Laurie."

"Cool that, certainly," said I.

"I prefer your friend with the mittens, I confess," said Maurice, "though I'm sure both were most agreeable companion. But come, Doctor, could n't you give us, —

'Sit ye down, my heartie, and gie us a crack,
Let the wind tak' the care o' the world on his back.'"

"You maunna attempt English poethry, my freend Quell; for it must be confessed ye 've a damnable accent of your ain."

"Milesian-Phœnician-Corkacian; nothing more, my boy, and a coaxing kind of recitative it is, after all. Don't tell me of your soft Etruscan, your plethoric *Hoch*-Deutsch, your flattering French. To woo and win the girl of your heart, give me a rich brogue and the least taste in life of blarney! There 's nothing like it, believe me, — every inflection of your voice suggesting some tender pressure of her soft hand or taper waist, every cadence falling on her gentle heart like a sea-breeze on a burning coast, or a soft sirocco over a rose-tree. And then, think, my boys, — and it is a fine thought after all, — what a glorious gift that is, out of the reach of kings to give or to take, what neither depends upon the act of Union nor the *Habeas Corpus.* No! they may starve us, laugh at us, tax us, transport us. They may take our mountains, our valleys, and our bogs; but, bad luck to them, they can't steal our 'blarney;' that 's the privilege one and indivisible with our identity. And while an Englishman raves of his liberty, a Scotchman of his oaten meal, blarney 's *our* birthright, and a prettier portion I 'd never ask to leave behind me to my sons. If I 'd as large a family as the ould gentleman called Priam we used to hear of at school, it 's the only inheritance I 'd give them, and one comfort there would be besides, the legacy duty would be only a trifle. Charley, my son, I see you 're listening to me, and nothing satisfies me more than to instruct inspiring youth; so never forget the old song, —

'If at your ease, the girls you'd please,
And win them, like Kate Kearney,
There 's but one way, I 've heard them say,
Go kiss the Stone of Blarney.' "

"What do you say, Shaugh, if we drink it with all the honors?"

"But gently: do I hear a trumpet there?"

"Ah, there go the bugles. Can it be daybreak already?"

"How short the nights are at this season!" said Quill.

"What an infernal rumpus they 're making! It 's not possible the troops are to march so early."

"It would n't surprise me in the least," quoth Maurice; "there is no knowing what the commander-in-chief 's not capable of, — the reason 's clear enough."

"And why, Maurice?"

"There's not a bit of blarney about him."

The *réveil* sang out from every brigade, and the drums beat to fall in, while Mike came galloping up at full speed to say that the bridge of boats was completed, and that the Twelfth were already ordered to cross. Not a moment was therefore to be lost; one parting cup we drained to our next meeting, and amidst a hundred "good-bys" we mounted our horses. Poor Hampden's brains, sadly confused by the wine and the laughing, he knew little of what was going on around him, and passed the entire time of our homeward ride in a vain endeavor to adapt "Mary Draper" to the air of "Rule Britannia."

CHAPTER XXII.

FUENTES D'ONORO.

From this period the French continued their retreat, closely followed by the allied armies, and on the 5th of April, Massena once more crossed the frontier into Spain, leaving thirty thousand of his bravest troops behind him, fourteen thousand of whom had fallen or been taken prisoners. Reinforcements, however, came rapidly pouring in. Two divisions of the Ninth corps had already arrived, and Drouet, with eleven thousand infantry and cavalry, was preparing to march to his assistance. Thus strengthened, the French army marched towards the Portuguese frontier, and Lord Wellington, who had determined not to hazard much by his blockade of Ciudad Rodrigo, fell back upon the large table-land beyond the Turones and the Dos Casas, with his left at Fort Conception, and his right resting upon Fuentes d'Onoro. His position extended to about five miles; and here, although vastly inferior in numbers, yet relying upon the bravery of the troops, and the moral ascendency acquired by their pursuit of the enemy, he finally resolved upon giving them battle.

Being sent with despatches to Pack's brigade, which formed the blockading force at Almeida, I did not reach Fuentes d'Onoro until the evening of the 3d. The thundering of the guns, which, even at the distance I was at, was plainly heard, announced that an attack had taken place, but it by no means prepared me for the scene which presented itself on my return.

The village of Fuentes d'Onoro, one of the most beautiful in Spain, is situated in a lovely valley, where all the charms of verdure so peculiar to the Peninsula seemed to have been scattered with a lavish hand. The citron and the arbutus, growing wild, sheltered every cottage door, and the olive and the laurel threw their shadows across the little rivulet which traversed the village. The houses, observing no uniform arrangement, stood wherever the caprice or the inclination of the builder suggested, surrounded with little gardens, the inequality of the ground imparting a picturesque feature to even the lowliest hut, while upon a craggy eminence above the rest, an ancient convent and a ruined chapel looked down upon the little peaceful hamlet with an air of tender protection.

Hitherto this lovely spot had escaped all the ravages of war. The light division of our army had occupied it for months long; and every family was gratefully remembered by some one or other of our officers, and more than one of our wounded found in the kind and affectionate watching of these poor peasants the solace which sickness rarely meets with when far from home and country.

It was, then, with an anxious heart I pressed my horse forward into a gallop as the night drew near. The artillery had been distinctly heard during the day, and while I burned with eagerness to know the result, I felt scarcely less anxious for the fate of that little hamlet whose name many a kind story had implanted in my memory. The moon was shining brightly as I passed the outpost, and leading my horse by the bridle, descended the steep and rugged causeway to the village beneath me. The lanterns were moving rapidly to and fro; the measured tread of infantry at night — that ominous sound, which falls upon the heart so sadly — told me that they were burying the dead. The air was still and breathless; not a sound was stirring save the step of the soldiery, and the harsh clash of the shovel as it struck the earth. I felt sad and sick at heart, and leaned against a tree; a nightingale concealed in the leaves was pouring forth its plaintive notes to the night air, and its low warble sounded like the dirge of the departed. Far beyond, in the plain, the French watch-fires were burning, and I could see from time to time the fatigue-parties moving in search of their wounded. At this moment the clock of the convent struck eleven, and a merry chime rang out, and was taken up by the echoes till it melted away in the distance. Alas, where were those whose hearts were wont to feel cheered at that happy peal; whose infancy it had gladdened; whose old age it has hallowed? The fallen walls, the broken roof-trees, the ruin and desolation on every side, told too plainly that they had passed away forever! The smoking embers, the torn-up pathway, denoted the hard-fought struggle; and as I passed along, I could see that every garden, where the cherry and the apple-blossom were even still perfuming the air, had now its sepulchre.

"Halt, there!" cried a hoarse voice in front. "You cannot pass this way, — the commander-in-chief's quarters."

I looked up and beheld a small but neat-looking cottage, which seemed to have suffered less than the others around. Lights were shining brightly from the windows, and I could even detect from time to time a figure muffled up in a cloak passing to and fro across the window; while another, seated at a table, was occupied in writing. I turned into a narrow path which led into the little square of the village, and here, as I approached, the hum and murmur of voices announced a bivouac party. Stopping to ask what had been the result of the day, I learned that a tremendous attack had been made by the French in column upon the village, which was at first successful; but that afterwards the Seventy-first and Seventy-ninth, marching down from the heights, had repulsed the enemy, and driven them beyond the Dos Casas. Five hundred had fallen in that fierce encounter, which was continued through every street and alley of the little hamlet. The gallant Highlanders now occupied the battle-field; and hearing that the cavalry brigade was some miles distant, I willingly accepted their offer to share their bivouac, and passed the remainder of the night among them.

When day broke, our troops were under arms, but the enemy showed no disposition to renew the attack. We could perceive, however, from the road to the southward, by the long columns of dust, that reinforcements were still arriving; and learned during the morning, from a deserter, that Massena himself had come up, and Bessières also, with twelve hundred cavalry, and a battery of the Imperial Guard.

From the movements observable in the enemy, it was soon evident that the battle, though deferred, was not abandoned; and the march of a strong force towards the left of their position induced our commander-in-chief to despatch the Seventh Division, under Houston, to occupy the height of Naval d'Aver — our extreme right — in support of which our brigade of cavalry marched as a covering force. The British position was thus unavoidably extended to the enormous length of seven miles, occupying a succession of small eminences, from the division at Fort Conception to the height of Naval d'Aver, — Fuentes d'Onoro forming nearly the centre of the line.

It was evident, from the thickening combinations of the French, that a more dreadful battle was still in reserve for us; and yet never did men look more anxiously for the morrow.

As for myself, I felt a species of exhilaration I had never before experienced; the events of the preceding day came dropping in upon me from every side, and at every new tale of gallantry or daring I felt my heart bounding with excited eagerness to win also my meed of honorable praise.

Crawfurd, too, had recognized me in the kindest manner; and while saying that he did not wish to withdraw me from my regiment on a day of battle, added that he would make use of me for the present on his staff. Thus was I engaged, from early in the morning till late in the evening, bringing orders and despatches along the line. The troop-horse I rode — for I reserved my gray for the following day — was scarcely able to carry me along, as towards dusk I jogged along in the direction of Naval d'Aver. When I did reach our quarters, the fires were lighted, and around one of them I had the good fortune to find a party of the Fourteenth occupied in discussing a very appetizing little supper. The clatter of plates, and the popping of champagne corks were most agreeable sounds. Indeed, the latter appeared to me so much too flattering an illusion, that I hesitated giving credit to my senses in the matter, when Baker called out, —

"Come, Charley, sit down; you 're just in the nick. Tom Marsden is giving us a benefit. You know Tom?"

And here he presented me in due form to that best of commissaries and most hospitable of horse-dealers.

"I can't introduce you to my friend on my right," continued Baker, "for my Spanish is only a skeleton battalion; but he 's a trump, — that I 'll vouch for; never flinches his glass, and looks as though he enjoyed all our nonsense."

The Spaniard, who appeared to comprehend that he was alluded to, gravely saluted me with a low bow, and offered his glass to hobnob with me. I returned the curtesy with becoming ceremony, while Hampden whispered in my ear, —

"A fine-looking fellow. You know who he is? Julian, the Guerilla chief."

I had heard much of both the strangers. Tom Marsden was a household word in every cavalry brigade; equally celebrated were his contracts and his claret. He knew every one, from Lord Wellington to the last-joined cornet; and while upon a march, there was no piece of better fortune than to be asked to dine with him. So in the very thick of battle, Tom's critical eye was scanning the squadrons engaged, with an accuracy as to the number of fresh horses that would be required upon the morrow that nothing but long practice and infinite coolness could have conferred.

Of the Guerilla I need not speak. The bold feats he accomplished, the aid he rendered to the cause of his country, have made his name historical. Yet still with all this, fatigue, more powerful than my curiosity, prevailed, and I sank into a heavy sleep upon the grass, while my merry companions kept up their revels till near morning. The last piece of consciousness I am sensible of was seeing Julian spreading his wide mantle over me as I lay, while I heard his deep voice whisper a kind wish for my repose.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BATTLE OF FUENTES D'ONORO.

So soundly did I sleep that the tumult and confusion of the morning never awoke me; and the Guerilla, whose cavalry were stationed along the edge of the ravine near the heights of Echora, would not permit of my being roused before the last moment. Mike stood near me with my horses, and it was only when the squadrons were actually forming that I sprang to my feet and looked around me.

The day was just breaking; a thick mist lay upon the parched earth, and concealed everything a hundred yards from where we stood. From this dense vapor the cavalry defiled along the base of the hill, followed by the horse artillery and the Guards, disappearing again as they passed us, but proving, by the mass of troops now assembled, that our position was regarded as the probable point of attack.

While the troops continued to take up their position, the sun shone out, and a slight breeze blowing at the same moment, the heavy clouds moved past, and we beheld the magnificent panorama of the battle-field. Before us, at the distance of less than half a league, the French cavalry were drawn up in three strong columns; the Cuirassiers of the Guard, plainly distinguished by their steel cuirasses, flanked by the Polish Lancers and a strong huzzar brigade; a powerful artillery train supported the left, and an infantry force occupied the entire space between the right and the rising ground opposite Poço Velho. Farther to the right again, the column destined for the attack of Fuentes d'Onoro were forming, and we could see that, profiting by their past experience, they were bent upon attacking the village with an overwhelming force.

For above two hours the French continued to manœuvre, more than one alteration having taken place in their disposition; fresh battalions were moved towards the front, and gradually the whole of their cavalry was assembled on the extreme left in front of our position. Our people were ordered to breakfast where we stood; and a little after seven o'clock a staff officer came riding down the line, followed in a few moments after by General Crawfurd, when no sooner was his well-known brown cob recognized by the troops than a hearty cheer greeted him along the whole division.

"Thank ye, boys; thank ye, boys, with all my heart. No man feels more sensibly what that cheer means than I do. Guards, Lord Wellington relies upon your maintaining this position, which is essential to the safety of the whole line. You will be supported by the light division. I need say no more. If such troops cannot keep their ground, none can. Fourteenth, there 's your place; the artillery and the Sixteenth are with you. They 've the odds of us in numbers, lads; but it will tell all the better in the 'Gazette.' I see they 're moving; so fall in now, fall in; and Merivale, move to the front. Ramsey, prepare to open your fire on the attacking squadrons."

As he spoke, the low murmuring sound of distantly-moving cavalry crept along the earth, growing louder and louder, till at length we could detect the heavy tramp of the squadrons as they came on in a trot, our pace being merely a walk. While we thus advanced into the plain, the artillery unlimbered behind us, and the Spanish cavalry, breaking into skirmishers, dashed boldly to the front.

It was an exciting moment. The ground dipped between the two armies so as to conceal the head of the advancing column of the French, and as the Spanish skirmishers disappeared down the ridge, our beating hearts and straining eyes followed their last horseman.

"Halt! halt!" was passed from squadron to squadron, and the same instant the sharp ring of the pistol-shots and the clash of steel from the valley, told us the battle had begun. We could hear the Guerilla war-cry mingle with the French shout, while the thickening crash of fire-arms implied a sharper conflict. Our fellows were already manifesting some impatience to press on, when a Spanish horseman appeared above the ridge, another followed, and another, and then pell-mell, broken and disordered, they fell back before the pursuing cavalry in flying masses; while the French, charging them hotly home, utterly routed and repulsed them.

The leading squadrons of the French now fell back upon their support; the column of attack thickened, and a thundering noise between their masses announced their brigade of light guns as they galloped to the front. It was then for the first time that I felt dispirited; far as my eye could stretch the dense mass of sabres extended, defiling from the distant hills and winding its slow length across the plain. I turned to look at our line, scarce one thousand strong, and could not help feeling that our hour was come: the feeling flashed vividly across my mind, but the next instant I felt my cheek redden with shame as I gazed upon the sparkling eyes and bold looks around me, the lips compressed, the hands knitted to their sabres; all were motionless, but burning to advance.

The French had halted on the brow of the hill to form. when Merivale came cantering up to us.

"Fourteenth, are you ready? Are you ready, lads?"

"Ready, sir! ready!" re-echoed along the line.

"Then push them home and charge! Charge!" cried he, raising his voice to a shout at the last word.

Heavens, what a crash was there! Our horses, in top condition, no sooner felt the spur than they bounded madly onwards. The pace — for the distance did not exceed four hundred yards — was like racing. To resist the impetus of our approach was impossible; and without a shot fired, scarcely a sabre-cut exchanged, we actually rode down their advanced squadrons, hurling them headlong upon their supporting division, and rolling men and horses beneath us on every side. The French fell back upon their artillery; but before they could succeed in opening their fire upon us, we had wheeled, and carrying off about seventy prisoners, galloped back to our position with the loss of but two men in the affair. The whole thing was so sudden, so bold, and so successful, that I remember well, as we rode back, a hearty burst of laughter was ringing through the squadron at the ludicrous display of horsemanship the French presented as they tumbled headlong down the hill; and I cannot help treasuring the recollection, for from that moment, all thought of anything short of victory completely quitted my mind, and many of my brother officers, who had participated in my feelings at the commencement of the day, confessed to me afterwards that it was then for the first time they felt assured of beating the enemy.

While we slowly fell back to our position, the French were seen advancing in great force from the village of Almeida, to the attack of Poço Velho; they came on at a rapid pace, their artillery upon their front and flank, large masses of cavalry hovering around them. The attack upon the village was now opened by the large guns; and amidst the booming of the artillery and the crashing volleys of small fire-arms, rose the shout of the assailants, and the wild cry of the Guerilla cavalry, who had formed in front of the village. The French advanced firmly, driving back the pickets, and actually inundated the devoted village with a shower of grape; the blazing fires burst from the ignited roofs; and the black, dense smoke, rising on high, seemed to rest like a pall over the little hamlet.

The conflict was now a tremendous one; our Seventh Division held the village with the bayonet; but the French continuing to pour in mass upon mass, drove them back with loss, and at the end of an hour's hard fighting, took possession of the place.

The wood upon the left flank was now seen to swarm with light infantry, and the advancement of their whole left proved that they meditated to turn our flank; the space between the village and the hill of Naval d'Aver became thus the central position; and here the Guerilla force, led on by Julian Sanches, seemed to await the French with confidence. Soon, however, the cuirassiers came galloping to the spot, and almost without exchanging a sabre-cut, the Guerillas fell back, and retired behind the Turones. This movement of Julian was more attributable to anger than to fear; for his favorite lieutenant, being mistaken for a French officer, was shot by a soldier of the Guards a few minutes before.

Montbrun pursued the Guerillas with some squadrons of horse, but they turned resolutely upon the French, and not till overwhelmed by numbers did they show any disposition to retreat.

The French, however, now threw forward their whole cavalry, and driving back the English horse, succeeded in turning the right of the Seventh Division. The battle by this time was general. The staff officers who came up from the left informed us that Fuentes d'Onoro was attacked in force, Massena himself leading the assault in person; while thus for seven miles the fight was maintained hotly at intervals, it was evident that upon the maintenance of our position the fortune of the day depended. Hitherto we had been repulsed from the village and the wood; and the dark masses of infantry which were assembled upon our right, seemed to threaten the hill of Naval d'Aver with as sad a catastrophe.

Crawfurd came now galloping up among us, his eye flashing fire, and his uniform splashed and covered with foam:

"Steady Sixteenth, steady! Don't blow your horses! Have your fellows advanced, Malcolm?" said he, turning to an officer who stood beside him. "Ay, there they go!" pointing with his finger to the wood where, as he spoke, the short ringing of the British rifle proclaimed the advance of that brigade. "Let the cavalry prepare to charge! And now, Ramsey, let us give it them home!"

Scarcely were the words spoken, when the squadrons were formed, and in an instant after, the French light infantry were seen retreating from the wood, and flying in disorderly masses across the plain. Our squadrons riding down among them, actually cut them to atoms, while the light artillery, unlimbering, threw in a deadly discharge of grape-shot.

"To the right, Fourteenth, to the right!" cried General Stewart. "Have at their hussars!"

Whirling by them, we advanced at a gallop, and dashed towards the enemy, who, not less resolutely bent, came boldly forward to meet us. The shock was terrific! The leading squadrons on both sides went down almost to a man, and all order being lost, the encounter became one of hand to hand.

The struggle was deadly; neither party would give way; and while fortune now inclined hither and thither, Sir Charles Stewart singled out the French general, Lamotte, and carried him off his prisoner. Meanwhile Montbrun's cavalry and the cuirassiers came riding up, and the retreat now sounding through our ranks, we were obliged to fall back upon the infantry. The French pursued us hotly; and so rapid was their movement, that before Ramsey's brigade could limber up and away, their squadrons had surrounded him and captured his guns.

"Where is Ramsey?" cried Crawfurd, as he galloped to the head of our division. "Cut off — cut off! Taken, by G—! There he goes!" said he, pointing with his finger, as a dense cloud of mingled smoke and dust moved darkly across the plain. "Form into column once more!"

As he spoke, the dense mass before us seemed agitated by some mighty commotion; the flashing of blades, and the rattling of small-arms, mingled with shouts of triumph or defiance, burst forth, and the ominous cloud lowering more darkly, seemed peopled by those in deadly strife. An English cheer pealed high above all other sounds; a second followed; the mass was rent asunder, and like the forked lightning from a thunder-cloud, Ramsey rode forth at the head of his battery, the horses bounding madly, while the guns sprang behind them like things of no weight; the gunners leaped to their places, and fighting hand to hand with the French cavalry, they flew across the plain.

"Nobly done, gallant Ramsey!" said a voice behind me. I turned at the sound; it was Lord Wellington who spoke. My eye fixed upon his stern features, I forgot all else; when he suddenly recalled me to my recollection by saying, —

"Follow your brigade, sir. Charge!"

In an instant I was with my people, who, intervening betwixt Ramsey and his pursuers, repulsed the enemy with loss, and carried off several prisoners. The French, however, came up in greater strength; overwhelming masses of cavalry came sweeping upon us, and we were obliged to retire behind the light division, which rapidly formed into squares to resist the cavalry. The Seventh Division, which was more advanced, were, however, too late for this movement, and before they could effect their formation, the French were upon them. At this moment they owed their safety to the Chasseurs Britanniques, who poured in a flanking fire, so close, and with so deadly an aim, that their foes recoiled, beaten and bewildered.

Meanwhile the French had become masters of Poço Velho; the formidable masses had nearly outflanked us on the right. The battle was lost if we could not fall back upon our original position, and concentrate our force upon Fuentes d'Onoro. To effect this was a work of great difficulty; but no time was to be lost. The Seventh Division were ordered to cross the Turones, while Crawfurd, forming the light division into squares, covered their retreat, and supported by the cavalry, sustained the whole force of the enemy's attack.

Then was the moment to witness the cool and steady bravery of British infantry; the squares dotted across the enormous plain seemed as nothing amidst that confused and flying multitude, composed of commissariat baggage, camp-followers, peasants, and finally, broken pickets and videttes arriving from the wood. A cloud of cavalry hovered and darkened around them; the Polish Lancers shook their long spears, impatient of delay, and the wild huzzas burst momentarily from their squadrons as they waited for the word to attack. But the British stood firm and undaunted; and although the enemy rode round their squares, Montbrun himself at their head, they never dared to charge them. Meanwhile the Seventh Division fell back, as if on a parade, and crossing the river, took up their ground at Frenada, pivoting upon the First Division; the remainder of the line also fell back, and assumed a position at right angles with their former one, the cavalry forming in front, and holding the French in check during the movement. This was a splendid manœuvre, and when made in face of an overnumbering enemy, one unmatched during the whole war.

At sight of this new front, the French stopped short, and opened a fire from their heavy guns. The British batteries replied with vigor and silenced the enemy's cannon. The cavalry drew out of range, and the infantry gradually fell back to their former position. While this was going on, the attack upon Fuentes d'Onoro was continued with unabated vigor. The three British regiments in the lower town were pierced by the French tirailleurs, who poured upon them in overwhelming numbers; the Seventy-ninth were broken, ten companies taken, and Cameron, their colonel, mortally wounded. Thus the lower village was in the hands of the enemy, while from the upper town the incessant roll of musketry proclaimed the obstinate resistance of the British.

At this period the reserves were called up from the right, in time to resist the additional troops which Drouet continued to bring on. The French, reinforced by the whole Sixth Corps, now came forward at a quick-step. Dashing through the ruined streets of the lower town, they crossed the rivulet, fighting bravely, and charged against the height. Already their leading files had gained the crag beside the chapel. A French colonel holding his cap upon his sword-point waved on his men.

The grizzly features of the grenadiers soon appeared, and the dark column, half-climbing, half-running, were seen scaling the height. A rifle-bullet sent the French leader tumbling from the precipice; and a cheer — mad and reckless as the war-cry of an Indian — rent the sky, as the 71st and 79th Highlanders sprang upon the enemy.

Our part was a short one; advancing in half squadrons, we were concealed from the observation of the enemy by the thick vineyards which skirted the lower town, waiting, with impatience, the moment when our gallant infantry should succeed in turning the tide of battle. We were ordered to dismount, and stood with our bridles on our arms, anxious and expectant. The charge of the French column was made close to where we were standing, — the inspiriting cheers of the officers, the loud *vivas* of the men, were plainly heard by us as they rushed to the assault; but the space between us was intersected by walls and brushwood, which totally prevented the movements of cavalry.

Fearlessly their dark column moved up the heights, fix-ing the bayonets as they went. No tirailleurs preceded them, but the tall shako of the Grenadier of the Guard was seen in the first rank. Long before the end of the column had passed us, the leading files were in action. A deafening peal of musketry — so loud, so dense, it seemed like artillery — burst forth. A volume of black smoke rolled heavily down from the heights and hid all from our view, except when the vivid lightning of the platoon firing rent the veil asunder, and showed us the troops almost in hand to hand conflict.

"It 's Picton's Division, I 'm certain," cried Merivale; "I hear the bagpipes of the Highlanders."

"You are right, sir," said Hampden, "the Seventy-first are in the same brigade, and I know their bugles well. There they go again!"

"Fourteenth! Fourteenth!" cried a voice from behind, and at the same moment, a staff officer, without his hat, and his horse bleeding from a recent sabre-cut, came up. "You must move to the rear, Colonel Merivale; the French have gained the heights! Move round by the causeway; bring up your squadrons as quickly as you can, and support the infantry!"

In a moment we were in our saddles; but scarcely was the word "to fall in" given, when a loud cheer rent the very air; the musketry seemed suddenly to cease, and the dark mass which continued to struggle up the heights wavered, broke, and turned.

"What can that be?" said Merivale. "What can it mean?"

"I can tell you, sir," said I, proudly, while I felt my heart throb as though it would bound from my bosom.

"And what is it, boy? Speak!"

"There it goes again! That was an Irish shout! The Eighty-eighth are at them!"

"By Jove, here they come!" said Hampden. "God help the Frenchmen now!"

The words were not well spoken, when the red coats of our gallant fellows were seen dashing through the vineyard.

"The steel, boys; nothing but the steel!" shouted a loud voice from the crag above our heads.

I looked up. It was the stern Picton himself who spoke. The Eighty-eighth now led the pursuit, and sprang from rock to rock in all the mad impetuosity of battle; and like some mighty billow rolling before the gale, the French went down the heights.

"Gallant Eighty-eighth! Gloriously done!" cried Picton, as he waved his hat.

"Aren't we Connaught robbers, now?" shouted a rich brogue, as its owner, breathless and bleeding, pressed forward in the charge.

A hearty burst of laughter mingled with the din of the battle.

"Now for it, boys! Now for *our* work!" said old Merivale, drawing his sabre as he spoke. "Forward! and charge!"

We waited not a second bidding, but bursting from our concealment, galloped down into the broken column. It was no regular charge, but an indiscriminate rush. Scarcely offering resistance, the enemy fell beneath our sabres, or the still more deadly bayonets of the infantry, who were inextricably mingled up in the conflict.

The chase was followed up for above half a mile, when we fell back, fortunately in good time; for the French had opened a heavy fire from their artillery, and regardless of their own retreating column, poured a shower of grape among our squadrons. As we retired, the struggling files of the Rangers joined us, — their faces and accoutrements blackened and begrimed with powder; many of them, themselves wounded, had captured prisoners; and one huge fellow of the grenadier company was seen driving before him a no less powerful Frenchman, and to whom, as he turned from time to time reluctantly, and scowled upon his jailer, the other vociferated some Irish imprecation, whose harsh intentions were made most palpably evident by a flourish of a drawn bayonet.

"Who is he?" said Mike; "who is he, ahagur?"

"Sorra one o' me knows," said the other; "but it 's the chap that shot Lieutenant Mahony, and I never took my eye off him after; and if the lieutenant 's not dead, sure it 'll be a satisfaction to him that I cotch him."

The lower town was now evacuated by the French, who retired beyond the range of our artillery; the upper continued in the occupation of our troops; and worn out and exhausted, surrounded by dead and dying, both parties abandoned the contest, and the battle was over.

Both sides laid claim to the victory; the French, because, having taken the village of Poço Velho, they had pierced the British line, and compelled them to fall back and assume a new position; the British, because the attack upon Fuentes d'Onoro has been successfully resisted, and the blockade of Almeida — the real object of the battle — maintained. The loss to each was tremendous; fifteen hundred men and officers, of whom three hundred were prisoners, were lost by the allies, and a far greater number fell among the forces of the enemy.

After the action, a brigade of the light division released the troops in the village, and the armies bivouacked once more in sight of each other.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A RENCONTRE.

"LIEUTENANT O'MALLEY, 14th Light Dragoons, to serve as extra aide-de-camp to Major-General Crawfurd, until the pleasure of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent is known." Such was the first paragraph of a general order, dated Fuentes d'Onoro, the day after the battle, which met me as I woke from a sound and heavy slumber, the result of thirteen hours on horseback.

A staff appointment was not exactly what I desired at the moment; but I knew that with Crawfurd my duties were more likely to be at the pickets and advanced posts of the army, than in the mere details of note-writing or despatch-bearing; besides that, I felt, whenever anything of importance was to be done, I should always obtain his permission to do duty with my regiment.

Taking a hurried breakfast, therefore, I mounted my horse, and cantered over to Villa Formosa, where the general's quarters were, to return my thanks for the promotion, and take the necessary steps for assuming my new functions.

Although the sun had risen about two hours, the fatigue of the previous day had impressed itself upon all around. The cavalry, men and horses, were still stretched upon the sward, sunk in sleep; the videttes, weary and tired, seemed anxiously watching for the relief; and the disordered and confused appearance of everything bespoke that discipline had relaxed its stern features, in compassion for the bold exertions of the preceding day. The only contrast to this general air of exhaustion and weariness on every side was a corps of sappers, who were busily employed upon the high grounds above the village. Early as it was, they seemed to have been at work some hours, — at least so their labors bespoke; for already a rampart of considerable extent had been thrown up, stockades implanted, and a breastwork was in a state of active preparation. The officer of the party, wrapped up in a loose cloak, and mounted upon a sharp-looking hackney, rode hither and thither as the occasion warranted, and seemed, as well as from the distance I could guess, something of a tartar. At least I could not help remarking how, at his approach, the several inferior officers seemed suddenly so much more on the alert, and the men worked with an additional vigor and activity. I stopped for some minutes to watch him, and seeing an engineer captain of my acquaintance among the party, could n't resist calling out: —

"I say, Hatchard, your friend on the chestnut mare must have had an easier day yesterday than some of us, or I 'll be hanged if he 'd be so active this morning." Hatchard hung his head in some confusion, and did not reply; and on my looking round, whom should I see before me but the identical individual I had so coolly been criticising, and who, to my utter horror and dismay, was no other than Lord Wellington himself. I did not wait for a second peep. Helter-skelter, through water, thickets, and brambles, away I went, clattering down the causeway like a madman. If a French squadron had been behind me, I should have had a stouter heart, although I did not fear pursuit. I felt his eye was upon me, — his sharp and piercing glance, that shot like an arrow into me; and his firm look stared at me in every object around.

Onward I pressed, feeling in the very recklessness of my course some relief to my sense of shame, and ardently hoping that some accident — some smashed arm or broken collar-bone — might befall me and rescue me from any notice my conduct might otherwise call for. I never drew rein till I reached the Villa Formosa, and pulled up short at a small cottage where a double sentry apprised me of the general's quarters. As I came up, the low lattice sprang quickly open, and a figure, half dressed, and more than half asleep, protruded his head.

"Well, what has happened? Anything wrong?" said he, whom I now recognized to be General Crawfurd.

"No, nothing wrong, sir," stammered I, with evident confusion. "I 'm merely come to thank you for your kindness in my behalf."

"You seemed in a devil of a hurry to do it, if I 'm to judge by the pace you came at. Come in and take your breakfast with us; I shall be dressed presently, and you 'll meet some of your brother aides-de-camp."

Having given my horse to an orderly, I walked into a little room, whose humble accommodations and unpretending appearance seemed in perfect keeping with the simple and unostentatious character of the general. The preparations for a good and substantial breakfast were, however, before me, and an English newspaper of a late date spread its most ample pages to welcome me. I had not been long absorbed in my reading, when the door opened, and the general, whose toilet was not yet completed, made his appearance.

"Egad, O'Malley, you startled me this morning. I thought we were in for it again."

I took this as the most seasonable opportunity to recount my mishap of the morning, and accordingly, without more ado, detailed the unlucky meeting with the commander-in-chief. When I came to the end, Crawfurd threw himself into a chair and laughed till the very tears coursed down his bronzed features.

"You don't say so, boy? You don't really tell me you said that? By Jove! I had rather have faced a platoon of musketry than have stood in your shoes! You did not wait for a reply, I think?"

"No, faith, sir, that I did not!"

"Do you suspect he knows you?"

"I trust not, sir; the whole thing passed so rapidly!"

"Well, it 's most unlucky in more ways than one!" He paused for a few moments as he said this, and then added, "Have you seen the general order?" pushing towards me a written paper as he spoke. It ran thus:—

G. O. ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE, VILLA FORMOSA,
May 6, 1811.

Memorandum.—Commanding officers are requested to send in to the military secretary, as soon as possible, the names of officers they may wish to have promoted in succession to those who have fallen in action."

"Now look at this list. The Honorable Harvey Howard, Grenadier Guards, to be first lieutenant, *vice* — No, not that. Henry Beauchamp — George Villiers — ay, here it is! Captain Lyttleton, Fourteenth Light Dragoons, to be major in the Third Dragoon Guards, *vice* Godwin, killed in action; Lieutenant O'Malley to be captain, *vice* Lyttleton, promoted. You see, boy, I did not forget you; you were to have had the vacant troop in your own regiment. Now I almost doubt the prudence of bringing your name under Lord Wellington's notice. He may have recognized you; and if he did so, why, I rather think — that is, I suspect — I mean, the quieter you keep the better."

While I poured forth my gratitude as warmly as I was able for the general's great kindness to me, I expressed my perfect concurrence in his views.

"Believe me, sir," said I, "I should much rather wait any number of years for my promotion, than incur the risk of a reprimand; the more so, as it is not the first time I have blundered with his lordship." I here narrated my former meeting with Sir Arthur, at which Crawfurd's mirth again burst forth, and he paced the room, holding his sides in an ecstasy of merriment.

"Come, come, lad, we'll hope for the best; we'll give you the chance that he has not seen your face, and send the list forward as it is. But here come our fellows."

As he spoke, the door opened, and three officers of his staff entered, to whom, being severally introduced, we chatted away about the news of the morning until breakfast.

"I've frequently heard of you from my friend Hammersley," said Captain Fitzroy, addressing me. "You were intimately acquainted, I believe?"

"Oh, yes! Pray, where is he now? We have not met for a long time."

"The poor fellow's invalided; that sabre-cut upon his head has turned out a sad affair, and he's gone back to England on a sick leave. Old Dashwood took him back with him as private secretary, or something of that sort."

"Ah!" said another, "Dashwood has daughters, has n't he? No bad notion of his; for Hammersley will be a baronet some of these days, with a rent-roll of eight or nine thousand per annum."

"Sir George Dashwood," said I, "has but one daughter, and I am quite sure that in his kindness to Hammersley no intentions of the kind you mention were mixed up."

"Well, I don't know," said the third, a pale, sickly youth, with handsome but delicate features. "I was on Dashwood's staff until a few weeks ago, and certainly I thought there was something going on between Hammersley and Miss Lucy, who, be it spoken, is a devilish fine girl, though rather disposed to give herself airs."

I felt my cheek and my temples boiling like a furnace; my hand trembled as I lifted my coffee to my lips; and I would have given my expected promotion twice over to have had any reasonable ground of quarrel with the speaker.

"Egad, lads," said Crawfurd, "that 's the very best thing I know about a command. As a bishop is always sure to portion off his daughters with deaneries and rectories, so your knowing old general always marries his among his staff."

This sally was met with the ready laughter of the subordinates, in which, however little disposed, I was obliged to join.

"You are quite right, sir," rejoined the pale youth; "and Sir George has no fortune to give his daughter."

"How came it, Horace, that you got off safe?" said Fitzroy, with a certain air of affected seriousness in his voice and manner. "I wonder they let such a prize escape them."

"Well, it was not exactly their fault, I do confess. Old Dashwood did the civil towards me, and *la belle Lucie* herself was condescending enough to be less cruel than to the rest of the staff. Her father threw us a good deal together; and in fact, I believe — I fear — that is — that I did n't behave quite well."

"You may rest perfectly assured of it, sir," said I; "whatever your previous conduct may have been, you have completely relieved your mind on this occasion, and behaved most shamefully."

Had a shell fallen in the midst of us, the faces around me could not have been more horror-struck than when, in a cool, determined tone, I spoke these few words. Fitzroy pushed his chair slightly back from the table, and fixed his eyes full upon me. Crawfurd grew dark-purple over his whole face and forehead, and looked from one to the other of us without speaking; while the Honorable Horace Delawar, the individual addressed, never changed a muscle of his wan and sickly features, but lifting his eyes slowly from his muffin, lisped softly out, —

"You think so? How very good!"

"General Crawfurd," said I, the moment I could collect myself sufficiently to speak, "I am deeply grieved that I should so far have forgotten myself as to disturb the harmony of your table; but when I tell you that Sir George Dashwood is one of my warmest friends on earth; that from my intimate knowledge of him, I am certain that gentleman's statements are either the mere outpourings of folly or worse —"

"By Jove, O'Malley! you have a very singular mode of explaining away the matter. Delawar, sit down again. Gentlemen, I have only one word to say about this transaction; I'll have no squabbles nor broils here; from this room to the guard-house is a five minutes' walk. Promise me, upon your honors, this altercation ends here, or as sure as my name's Crawfurd, you shall both be placed under arrest, and the man who refuses to obey me shall be sent back to England."

Before I well knew in what way to proceed, Mr. Delawar rose and bowed formally to the general, while I imitated his example; silently we resumed our places, and after a pause of a few moments, the current of conversation was renewed, and other topics discussed, but with such evident awkwardness and constraint that all parties felt relieved when the general rose from table.

"I say, O'Malley, have you forwarded the returns to the adjutant-general's office?"

"Yes, sir; I despatched them this morning before leaving my quarters."

"I am glad of it; the irregularities on this score have called forth a heavy reprimand at headquarters."

I was also glad of it, and it chanced that by mere acci dent I remembered to charge Mike with the papers, which, had they not been lying unsealed upon the table before me, would, in all likelihood, have escaped my attention. The post started to Lisbon that same morning, to take advantage of which I had sat up writing for half the night. Little was I aware at the moment what a mass of trouble and annoyance was in store for me from the circumstance.

CHAPTER XXV.

ALMEIDA.

On the morning of the 7th we perceived, from a movement in the French camp, that the wounded were being sent to the rear, and shortly afterwards the main body of their army commenced its retreat. They moved with slow, and as it were, reluctant steps; and Bessiéres, who commanded the Imperial Guard, turned his eyes more than once to that position which all the bravery of his troops was unavailing to capture. Although our cavalry lay in force to the front of our line, no attempt was made to molest the retreating French; and Massena, having retired beyond the Aguada, left a strong force to watch the ford, while the remainder of the army fell back upon Cuidad Rodrigo.

During this time we had succeeded in fortifying our position at Fuentes d'Onoro so strongly as to resist any new attack, and Lord Wellington now turned his whole attention to the blockade of Almeida, which, by Massena's retreat, was abandoned to its fate.

On the morning of the 10th I accompanied General Crawfurd in a reconnoissance of the fortress, which, from the intelligence we had lately received, could not much longer hold out against our blockade. The fire from the enemy's artillery was, however, hotly maintained; and as night fell, some squadrons of the Fourteenth, who were picketed near, were unable to light their watch-fires, being within reach of their shot. As the darkness increased so did the cannonade, and the bright flashes from the walls and the deep booming of the artillery became incessant.

A hundred conjectures were afloat to account for the circumstance; some asserting that what we heard were mere signals to Massena's army; and others, that Brennier was destroying and mutilating the fortress before he evacuated it to the allies.

It was little past midnight when, tired from the fatigues of the day, I had fallen asleep beneath a tree, an explosion, louder than any which preceded it, burst suddenly forth, and as I awoke and looked about me, I perceived the whole heavens illuminated by one bright glare, while the crashing noise of falling stones and crumbling masonry told me that a mine had been sprung; the moment after, all was calm and still and motionless; a thick black smoke increasing the sombre darkness of the night shut out every star from view, and some drops of heavy rain began to fall.

The silence, ten times more appalling than the din which preceded it, weighed heavily upon my senses, and a dread of some unknown danger crept over me; the exhaustion, however, was greater than my fear, and again I sank into slumber.

Scarcely had I been half an hour asleep, when the blast of a trumpet again awoke me, and I found, amidst the confusion and excitement about, that something of importance had occurred. Questions were eagerly asked on all sides, but no one could explain what had happened. Towards the town all was as still as death, but a dropping, irregular fire of musketry issued from the valley beside the Aguada. "What can this mean; what can it be?" we asked of each other. "A sortie from the garrison," said one; "A night attack by Massena's troops," cried another; and while thus we disputed and argued, a horseman was heard advancing along the road at the top of his speed.

"Where are the cavalry?" cried a voice I recognized as one of my brother aides-de-camp. "Where are the Fourteenth?"

A cheer from our party answered this question, and the next moment, breathless and agitated, he rode in among us.

"What is it? Are we attacked?"

"Would to Heaven that were all! But come along, lads, follow me."

"What can it be, then?" said I again; while my anxiety knew no bounds.

"Brennier has escaped; burst his way through Pack's Division, and has already reached Valde Mula."

"The French have escaped!" was repeated from mouth to mouth; while, pressing spurs to our horses, we broke into a gallop, and dashed forward in the direction of the musketry. We soon came up with the 36th Infantry, who, having thrown away their knapsacks, were rapidly pressing the pursuit. The maledictions which burst from every side proved how severely the misfortune was felt by all, while the eager advance of the men bespoke how ardently they longed to repair the mishap.

Dark as was the night, we passed them in a gallop, when suddenly the officer who commanded the leading squadron called out to halt.

"Take care there, lads!" cried he; "I hear the infantry before us; we shall be down upon our own people."

The words were hardly spoken, when a bright flash blazed out before us, and a smashing volley was poured into the squadron.

"The French! the French, by Jove!" said Hampden. "Forward, boys! charge them!"

Breaking into open order, to avoid our wounded comrades, several of whom had fallen by the fire, we rode down among them. In a moment their order was broken, their ranks pierced, and fresh squadrons coming up at the instant, they were sabred to a man.

After this the French pursued their march in silence, and even when assembling in force we rode down upon their squares, they never halted nor fired a shot. At Barba del Puerco, the ground being unfit for cavalry, the Thirty-sixth took our place, and pressed them hotly home. Several of the French were killed, and above three hundred made prisoners, but our fellows, following up the pursuit too rashly, came upon an advanced body of Massena's force, drawn up to await and cover Brennier's retreat; the result was the loss of above thirty men in killed and wounded.

Thus were the great efforts of the three preceding days rendered fruitless and nugatory. To maintain this blockade, Lord Wellington, with an inferior force, and a position by no means strong, had ventured to give the enemy battle; and now by the unskilfulness of some, and the negligence of others, were all his combinations thwarted, and the

French general enabled to march his force through the midst of the blockading columns almost unmolested and uninjured.

Lord Wellington's indignation was great, as well it might be; the prize for which he had contested was torn from his grasp at the very moment he had won it, and although the gallantry of the troops in the pursuit might, under other circumstances, have called forth eulogium, his only observation on the matter was a half-sarcastic allusion to the inconclusive effects of undisciplined bravery. "Notwithstanding," says the general order of the day, "what has been printed in gazettes and newspapers, we have never seen small bodies, unsupported, successfully opposed to large; nor has the experience of any officer realized the stories which all have read, of whole armies being driven by a handful of light infantry and dragoons."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NIGHT ON THE AZAVA.

Massena was now recalled, and Marmont, having assumed the command of the French army, retired towards Salamanca, while our troops went into cantonments upon the Aguada. A period of inaction succeeded to our previous life of bustle and excitement, and the whole interest of the campaign was now centred in Beresford's army, exposed to Soult in Estramadura.

On the 15th Lord Wellington set out for that province, having already directed a strong force to march upon Badajos.

"Well, O'Malley," said Crawfurd, as he returned from bidding Lord Wellington good-by, "your business is all right; the commander-in-chief has signed my recommendation, and you will get your troop."

While I continued to express my grateful acknowledgments for his kindness, the general, apparently inattentive to all I was saying, paced the room with hurried steps, stopping every now and then to glance at a large map of Spain which covered one wall of the apartment, while he muttered to himself some broken and disjointed sentences.

"Eight leagues — too weak in cavalry — with the left upon Fuenta Grenaldo — a strong position. O'Malley, you'll take a troop of dragoons and patrol the country towards Castro; you'll reconnoitre the position the Sixth Corps occupies, but avoid any collision with the enemy's pickets, keeping the Azava between you and them. Take rations for three days."

"When shall I set out, sir?"

"Now!" was the reply.

Knowing with what pleasure the hardy veteran recognized anything like alacrity and despatch, I resolved to gratify him; and before half an hour had elapsed, was ready with my troop to receive his final orders.

"Well done, boy!" said he, as he came to the door of the hut, "you 've lost no time. I don't believe I have any further instructions to give you; to ascertain as far as possible the probable movement of the enemy is my object, that 's all." As he spoke this, he waved his hand, and wishing me "Good-by," walked leisurely back into the house. I saw that his mind was occupied by other thoughts; and although I desired to obtain some more accurate information for my guidance, knowing his dislike to questions, I merely returned his salute, and set forth upon my journey.

The morning was beautiful; the sun had risen about an hour, and the earth, refreshed by the heavy dew of the night, was breathing forth all its luxuriant fragrance. The river which flowed beside us was clear as crystal, showing beneath its eddying current the shining, pebbly bed, while upon the surface, the water-lilies floated or sank as the motion of the stream inclined. The tall cork-trees spread their shadows about us, and the richly plumed birds hopped from branch to branch awaking the echoes with their notes.

It is but seldom that the heart of man is thoroughly attuned to the circumstances of the scenery around him. How often do we need a struggle with ourselves to enjoy the rich and beautiful landscape which lies smiling in its freshness before us! How frequently do the blue sky and the calm air look down upon the heart darkened and shadowed with affliction! And how often have we felt the discrepancy between the lowering look of winter and the glad sunshine of our hearts! The harmony of the world without with our thoughts within is one of the purest, as it is one of the greatest, sources of happiness. Our hopes and our ambitions lose their selfish character when we feel that fortune smiles upon us from all around, and the flattery which speaks to our hearts from the bright stars and the blue sky, the peaked mountain or the humble flower, is greater in its mute eloquence than all the tongue of man can tell us.

This feeling did I experience in all its fulness as I ruminated upon my bettered fortunes, and felt within myself that secret instinct that tells of happiness to come. In such moods of mind my thoughts strayed ever homewards, and I could not help confessing how little were all my successes in my eyes, did I not hope for the day when I should pour forth my tale of war and battle-field to the ears of those who loved me.

I resolved to write home at once to my uncle. I longed to tell him each incident of my career, and my heart glowed as I thought over the broken and disjointed sentences which every cotter around would whisper of my fortunes, far prouder as they would be in the humble deeds of one they knew, than in the proudest triumphs of a nation's glory.

Indeed, Mike himself gave the current to my thoughts. After riding beside me for some time in silence, he remarked, —

"And is n't it Father Rush will be proud when he sees your honor 's a captain; to think of the little boy that he used to take before him on the ould gray mare for a ride down the avenue, — to think of him being a real captain, six feet two without his boots, and galloping over the French as if they were lurchers! Peggy Mahon, that nursed you, will be the proud woman the day she hears it; and there won't be a soldier sober in his quarters that night in Portumna barracks! 'Pon my soul, there 's not a thing with a red coat on it, if it was even a scarecrow to frighten the birds from the barley, that won't be treated with respect when they hear of the news."

The country through which we travelled was marked at every step by the traces of a retreating army: the fields of rich corn lay flattened beneath the tramp of cavalry, or the wheels of the baggage-wagons; the roads, cut up and nearly impassable, were studded here and there with marks which indicated a bivouac. At the same time, everything around bore a very different aspect from what we had observed in Portugal; there, the vindictive cruelty of the French soldiery had been seen in full sway: the ruined châteaux, the burned villages, the desecrated altars, the murdered peasantry, — all attested the revengeful spirit of a beaten and baffled enemy. No sooner, however, had they crossed the frontiers, than, as if by magic, their character became totally changed. Discipline and obedience succeeded to recklessness and pillage; and instead of treating the natives with inhumanity and cruelty, in all their intercourse with the Spaniards the French behaved with moderation and even kindness. Paying for everything, obtaining their billets peaceably and quietly, marching with order and regularity, they advanced into the heart of the country, showing, by the most irrefragable proof, the astonishing evidences of a discipline which, by a word, could convert the lawless irregularities of a ruffian soldiery into the orderly habits and obedient conduct of a highly-organized army.

As we neared the Azava, the tracks of the retiring enemy became gradually less perceptible, and the country, uninjured by the march, extended for miles around us in all the richness and abundance of a favored climate. The tall corn, waving its yellow gold, reflected like a sea the clouds that moved slowly above it. The wild gentian and the laurel grew thickly around, and the cattle stood basking in the clear streams, while some listless peasant lounged upon the bank beside them. Strange as all these evidences of peace and tranquillity were, so near to the devastating track of a mighty army, yet I have more than once witnessed the fact, and remarked how, but a short distance from the line of our hurried march, the country lay untouched and uninjured; and though the clank of arms and the dull roll of the artillery may have struck upon the ear of the far-off dweller in his native valley, he listened as he would have done to the passing thunder as it crashed above him; and when the bright sky and pure air succeeded to the lowering atmosphere and the darkening storm, he looked forth upon his smiling fields and happy home, while he muttered to his heart a prayer of thanksgiving that the scourge was passed.

We bivouacked upon the bank of the river, a truly Salvator Rosa scene; the rocks, towering high above us, were fissured by the channel of many a trickling stream, seeking, in its zigzag current, the bright river below. The dark pine-tree and the oak mingled their foliage with the graceful cedar, which spread its fan-like branches about us. Through the thick shade some occasional glimpses of a starry sky could yet be seen, and a faint yellow streak upon the silent river told that the queen of night was there.

When I had eaten my frugal supper, I wandered forth alone upon the bank of the stream, now standing to watch its bold sweeps as it traversed the lonely valley before me, now turning to catch a passing glance at our red watch-fires and the hardy features which sat around. The hoarse and careless laugh, the deep-toned voice of some old campaigner holding forth his tale of flood and field, were the only sounds I heard; and gradually I strolled beyond the reach of even these. The path beside the river, which seemed scarped from the rock, was barely sufficient for the passage of one man, a rude balustrade of wood being the only defence against the precipice, which, from a height of full thirty feet, looked down upon the stream. Here and there some broad gleam of moonlight would fall upon the opposite bank, which, unlike the one I occupied, stretched out into rich meadow and pasturage, broken by occasional clumps of ilex and beech. River scenery has been ever a passion with me. I can glory in the bold and broken outline of a mighty mountain; I can gaze with delighted eyes upon the boundless seas, and know not whether to like it more in all the mighty outpouring of its wrath, when the white waves lift their heads to heaven and break themselves in foam upon the rocky beach, or in the calm beauty of its broad and mirrored surface, in which the bright world of sun and sky are seen full many a fathom deep. But far before these, I love the happy and tranquil beauty of some bright river, tracing its winding current through valley and through plain, now spreading into some calm and waveless lake, now narrowing to an eddying stream with mossy rocks and waving trees darkening over it. There 's not a hut, however lowly, where the net of the fisherman is stretched upon the sward, around whose hearth I do not picture before me the faces of happy toil and humble contentment, while, from the ruined tower upon the crag, methinks I hear the ancient sounds of wassail and of welcome; and though the keep be fissured and the curtain fallen, and though for banner there "waves some tall wall-flower," I can people its crumbling walls with images of the past; and the merry laugh of the warder, and the clanking tread of the mailed warrior, are as palpably before me as the tangled lichen that now trails from its battlements.

As I wandered on, I reached the little rustic stair which led downward from the path to the river's side; and on examining farther, perceived that at this place the stream was fordable; a huge flat rock, filling up a great part of the river's bed, occupied the middle, on either side of which the current ran with increased force.

Bent upon exploring, I descended the cliff, and was preparing to cross, when my attention was attracted by the twinkle of a fire at some distance from me, on the opposite side; the flame rose and fell in fitful flashes, as though some hand were ministering to it at the moment. As it was impossible, from the silence on every side, that it could proceed from a bivouac of the enemy, I resolved on approaching it, and examining it for myself. I knew that the shepherds in remote districts were accustomed thus to pass the summer nights, with no other covering save the blue vault above them. It was not impossible, too, that it might prove a Guerilla party, who frequently, in small numbers, hang upon the rear of a retreating army. Thus conjecturing, I crossed the stream, and quickening my pace, walked forward in the direction of the blaze. For a moment a projecting rock obstructed my progress; and while I was devising some means of proceeding farther, the sound of voices near me arrested my attention. I listened, and what was my astonishment to hear that they spoke in French. I now crept cautiously to the verge of the rock and looked over; the moon was streaming in its full brilliancy upon a little shelving strand beside the stream, and here I now beheld the figure of a French officer. He was habited in the undress uniform of a *chasseur à cheval*, but wore no arms; indeed his occupation at the moment was anything but a warlike one, he being leisurely employed in collecting some flasks of champagne which apparently had been left to cool within the stream.

"*Eh bien, Alphonse!*" said a voice in the direction of the fire, "what are you delaying for?"

"I'm coming, I'm coming," said the other; "but, *par*

Dieu! I can only find five of our bottles; one seems to have been carried away by the stream."

"No matter," replied the other, "we are but three of us, and one is, or should be, on the sick list."

The only answer to this was the muttered chorus of a French drinking-song, interrupted at intervals by an imprecation upon the missing flask. It chanced, at this moment, that a slight clinking noise attracted me, and on looking down, I perceived at the foot of the rock the prize he sought for. It had been, as he conceived, carried away by an eddy of the stream and was borne, as a true prisoner-of-war, within my grasp. I avow that from this moment my interest in the scene became considerably heightened; such a waif as a bottle of champagne was not to be despised in circumstances like mine; and I watched with anxious eyes every gesture of the impatient Frenchman, and alternately vibrated between hope and fear, as he neared or receded from the missing flask.

"Let it go to the devil," shouted his companion, once more. "Jacques has lost all patience with you."

"Be it so, then," said the other, as he prepared to take up his burden. At this instant I made a slight effort so to change my position as to obtain a view of the rest of the party. The branch by which I supported myself, however, gave way beneath my grasp with a loud crash. I lost my footing, and slipping downward from the rock, came plump into the stream below. The noise, the splash, and more than all, the sudden appearance of a man beside him, astounded the Frenchman, who almost let fall his pannier, and thus we stood confronting each other for at least a couple of minutes in silence. A hearty burst of laughter from both parties terminated this awkward moment, while the Frenchman, with the readiness of his country, was the first to open the negotiation.

"*Sacré Dieu!*" said he, "what can you be doing here? You 're English, without doubt."

"Even so," said I; "but that is the very question I was about to ask you; what are you doing here?"

"*Eh bien,*" replied the other, gayly, "you shall be answered in all frankness. Our captain was wounded in the action of the 8th, and we heard had been carried up the country by some peasants. As the army fell back, we obtained permission to go in search of him. For two days all was fruitless; the peasantry fled at our approach; and although we captured some of our stolen property — among other things, the contents of this basket — yet we never came upon the track of our comrade till this evening. A good-hearted shepherd had taken him to his hut, and treated him with every kindness, but no sooner did he hear the gallop of our horses and the clank of our equipments, than, fearing himself to be made a prisoner, he fled up the mountains, leaving our friend behind him; *voilà notre histoire.* Here we are, three in all, one of us with a deep sabre-cut in his shoulder. If you are the stronger party, we are, I suppose, your prisoners; if not — "

What was to have followed I know not, for at this moment his companion, who had finally lost all patience, came suddenly to the spot.

"A prisoner," cried he, placing a heavy hand upon my shoulder, while with the other he held his drawn sword pointed towards my breast.

To draw a pistol from my bosom was the work of a second; and while gently turning the point of his weapon away, I coolly said, —

"Not so fast, my friend, not so fast! The game is in my hands, not yours. I have only to pull this trigger, and my dragoons are upon you; whatever fate befall me, yours is certain."

A half-scornful laugh betrayed the incredulity of him I addressed, while the other, apparently anxious to relieve the awkwardness of the moment, suddenly broke in with, —

"He is right, Auguste, and you are wrong; we are in his power; that is," added he, smiling, "if he believes there is any triumph in capturing such *pauvres diables* as ourselves."

The features of him he addressed suddenly lost their scornful expression, and sheathing his sword with an air of almost melodramatic solemnity, he gravely pulled up his mustaches, and after a pause of a few seconds, solemnly ejaculated a malediction upon his fortune.

"*C'est toujours ainsi*," said he, with a bitterness that only a Frenchman can convey when cursing his destiny. "*Soyez bon enfant*, and see what will come of it. Only be good-natured, only be kind, and if you have n't bad luck at the end of it, it 's only because fortune has a heavier stroke in reserve for you hereafter."

I could not help smiling at the Frenchman's philosophy, which, assuming as a good augury, he gayly said, "So, then, you 'll not make us prisoners. Is n't it so?"

"Prisoners," said the other, "nothing of the kind. Come and sup with us; I 'll venture to say our larder is as well stocked as your own; in any case an omelette, a cold chicken, and a glass of champagne are not bad things in our circumstances."

I could not help laughing outright at the strangeness of the proposal. "I fear I must decline," said I; "you seem to forget I am placed here to watch, not to join you."

"*A la bonne heure*," cried the younger of the two; "do both. Come along; *soyez bon camarade;* you are always near your own people, so don't refuse us."

In proportion as I declined, they both became more pressing in their entreaties, and at last, I began to dread lest my refusal might seem to proceed from some fear as to the good faith of the invitation, and I never felt so awkwardly placed as when one plumply pressed me by saying, —

"*Mais pourquoi pas, mon cher?*"

I stammered out something about duty and discipline, when they both interrupted me by a long burst of laughter.

"Come, come!" said they; "in an hour — in half an hour, if you will — you shall be back with your own people. We 've had plenty of fighting latterly, and we are likely to have enough in future; we know something of each other by this time in the field; let us see how we get on in the bivouac!"

Resolving not to be outdone in generosity, I replied at once, "Here goes, then!"

Five minutes afterwards I found myself seated at their bivouac fire. The captain, who was the oldest of the party, was a fine soldier-like fellow of some forty years old; he had served in the Imperial Guard through all the campaigns of Italy and Austria, and abounded in anecdotes of the French army. From him I learned many of those characteristic traits which so eminently distinguish the imperial troops, and saw how completely their bravest and boldest feats of arms depended upon the personal valor of him who led them on. From the daring enterprise of Napoleon at Lodi to the conduct of the lowest corporal in the *grande armée*, the picture presents nothing but a series of brilliant and splendid chivalry; while, at the same time, the warlike character of the nation is displayed by that instinctive appreciation of courage and daring which teaches them to follow their officers to the very cannon's mouth.

"It was at Elchingen," said the captain, "you should have seen them. The regiment in which I was a lieutenant was ordered to form close column, and charge through a narrow ravine to carry a brigade of guns, which, by a flanking fire, were devastating our troops. Before we could reach the causeway, we were obliged to pass an open plain in which the ground dipped for about a hundred yards; the column moved on, and though it descended one hill, not a man ever mounted the opposite one. A very avalanche of balls swept the entire valley; and yet amidst the thunder and the smoke, the red glare of the artillery, and the carnage around them, our grenadiers marched firmly up. At last, Marshal Ney sent an aide-de-camp with orders to the troops to lie flat down, and in this position the artillery played over us for above half an hour. The Austrians gradually slackened, and finally discontinued their fire; this was the moment to resume the attack. I crept cautiously to my knees and looked about. One word brought my men around me; but I found to my horror that of a battalion who came into action fourteen hundred strong, not five hundred remained; and that I myself, a mere lieutenant, was now the senior officer of the regiment. Our gallant colonel lay dead beside my feet. At this instant a thought struck me. I remembered a habit he possessed in moments of difficulty and danger, of placing in his shako a small red plume which he commonly carried in his belt. I searched for it, and found it. As I held it aloft, a maddening cheer burst around me, while from out the line each officer sprang madly forward, and rushed to the head of the column. It was no longer a march. With a loud cry of vengeance, the mass rushed forward, the men trying to outstrip their officers, and come first in contact with the foe. Like tigers on the spring, they fell upon the enemy, who, crushed, overwhelmed, and massacred, lay in slaughtered heaps around the cannon. The cavalry of the Guard came thundering on behind us; a whole division followed; and three thousand five hundred prisoners, and fourteen pieces of artillery were captured.

"I sat upon the carriage of a gun, my face begrimed with powder, and my uniform blackened and blood-stained. The whole thing appeared like some shocking dream. I felt a hand upon my shoulder, while a rough voice called in my ear, '*Capitaine du soixante-neuvième, tu es mon frère!*'

"It was Ney who spoke. This," added the brave captain, his eyes filling as he said the words, — "this is the sabre he gave me."

I know not why I have narrated this anecdote; it has little in itself, but somehow, to me it brings back in all its fulness the recollection of that night.

There was something so strongly characteristic of the old Napoleonist in the tone of his narrative that I listened throughout with breathless attention. I began to feel too, for the first time, what a powerful arm in war the Emperor had created by fostering the spirit of individual enterprise. The field thus opened to fame and distinction left no bounds to the ambition of any. The humble conscript, as he tore himself from the embraces of his mother, wiped his tearful eyes to see before him in the distance the bâton of a marshal. The bold soldier who stormed a battery felt his heart beat more proudly and more securely beneath the cordon of the Legion than behind a cuirass of steel; and to a people in whom the sense of duty alone would seem cold, barren, and inglorious, he had substituted a highly-wrought chivalrous enthusiasm; and by the *prestige* of his own name, the proud memory of his battles, and the glory of those mighty tournaments at which all Europe were the spectators, he had converted a nation into an army.

By a silent and instinctive compact we appeared to avoid those topics of the campaign in which the honor of our respective arms was interested; and once, when, by mere accident, the youngest of the party adverted to Fuentes d'Onoro, the old captain adroitly turned the current of the conversation by saying, "Come, Alphonse, let's have a song."

"Yes," said the other. "*Les Pas de Charge.*"

"No, no," said the captain; "if I am to have a choice, let it be that little Breton song you gave us on the Danube."

"So be it then," said Alphonse. "Here goes!"

I have endeavored to convey, by a translation, the words he sang; but I feel conscious how totally their feeling and simplicity are lost when deprived of their own *patois*, and the wild but touching melody that accompanied them.

THE BRETON HOME.

When the battle is o'er, and the sounds of fight
  Have closed with the closing day,
How happy around the watch-fire's light
  To chat the long hours away;
To chat the long hours away, my boy,
  And talk of the days to come,
Or a better still and a purer joy,
  To think of our far-off home.

How many a cheek will then grow pale,
  That never felt a tear!
And many a stalwart heart will quail,
  That never quailed in fear!
And the breast that like some mighty rock
  Amidst the foaming sea
Bore high against the battle's shock
  Now heaves like infancy.

And those who knew each other not
  Their hands together steal,
Each thinks of some long hallowed spot,
  And all like brothers feel:
Such holy thoughts to all are given;
  The lowliest has his part;
The love of home, like love of heaven,
  Is woven in our heart.

There was a pause as he concluded, each sank in his own reflections. How long we should have thus remained, I know not; but we were speedily aroused from our reveries by the tramp of horses near us. We listened, and could plainly detect in their rude voices and coarse laughter the approach of a body of Guerillas. We looked from one to the other in silence and in fear. Nothing could be more unfortunate should we be discovered. Upon this point we were left little time to deliberate; for with a loud cheer, four Spanish horsemen galloped up to the spot, their carbines in the rest. The Frenchmen sprang to their feet, and seized their sabres, bent upon making a resolute resistance. As for me, my determination was at once taken. Remaining quietly seated upon the grass, I stirred not for a moment, but addressing him who appeared to be the chief of the Guerillas, said, in Spanish: —

"These are my prisoners; I am a British officer of dragoons, and my party is yonder."

This evidently unexpected declaration seemed to surprise them, and they conferred for a few moments together. Meanwhile they were joined by two others, in one of whom we could recognize, by his costume, the real leader of the party.

"I am captain in the light dragoons," said I, repeating my declaration.

"*Morte de Dios!*" replied he; "it is false; you are a spy!"

The word was repeated from lip to lip by his party, and I saw, in their lowering looks and darkened features, that the moment was a critical one for me.

"Down with your arms!" cried he, turning to the Frenchmen. "Surrender yourselves our prisoners; I'll not bid ye twice!"

The Frenchmen turned upon me an inquiring look, as though to say that upon me now their hopes entirely reposed.

"Do as he bids you," said I; while at the same moment I sprang to my legs, and gave a loud, shrill whistle, the last echo of which had not died away in the distance ere it was replied to.

The Tables turned!

"Make no resistance now," said I to the Frenchmen; "our safety depends on this."

While this was passing two of the Spaniards had dismounted, and detaching a coil of rope which hung from their saddle-peak, were proceeding to tie the prisoners wrist to wrist; the others, with their carbines to the shoulder, covered us man by man, the chief of the party having singled out me as his peculiar prey.

"The fate of Mascarenhas might have taught you better," said he, "than to play this game." And then added with a grim smile, "But we 'll see if an Englishman will not make as good a carbonado as a Portuguese!"

This cruel speech made my blood run cold, for I knew well to what he alluded. I was at Lisbon at the time it happened, but the melancholy fate of Julian Mascarenhas, the Portuguese spy, had reached me there. He was burned to death at Torres Vedras!

The Spaniard's triumph over my terror was short-lived, indeed, for scarcely had the words fallen from his lips, when a party of the Fourteenth, dashing through the river at a gallop, came riding up. The attitude of the Guerillas, as they sat with presented arms, was sufficient for my fellows who needed not the exhortation of him who rode foremost of the party: —

"Ride them down, boys! Tumble them over! Flatten their broad beavers, the infernal thieves!"

"Whoop!" shouted Mike, as he rode at the chief with the force of a catapult. Down went the Spaniard, horse and all; and before he could disentangle himself, Mike was upon him, his knee pressed upon his neck.

"Is n't it enough for ye to pillage the whole country without robbing the king's throops!" cried he, as he held him fast to the earth with one hand, while he presented a loaded pistol to his face.

By this time the scene around me was sufficiently ludicrous. Such of the Guerillas as had not been thrown by force from their saddles, had slid peaceably down, and depositing their arms upon the ground, dropped upon their knees in a semicircle around us, and amidst the hoarse laughter of the troopers, and the irrepressible merriment of the

Frenchmen, rose up the muttered prayers of the miserable Spaniards, who believed that now their last hour was come.

"*Madre de Dios*, indeed!" cried Mike, imitating the tone of a repentant old sinner in a patched mantle; "it's much the blessed Virgin thinks of the like o' ye, thieves and rogues as ye are; it a'most puts me beyond my senses to see ye there crossing yourselves like *rale* Christians."

If I could not help indulging myself in this retributive cruelty towards the chief, and leaving him to the tender mercies of Mike, I ordered the others to rise and form in line before me. Affecting to occupy myself entirely with them, I withdrew the attention of all from the French officers, who remained quiet spectators of the scene around them.

"*Point de façons,* gentlemen," said I, in a whisper. "Get to your horses and away! Now's your time. Good-by!"

A warm grasp of the hand from each was the only reply, and I turned once more to my discomforted friends the Guerillas.

"There, Mike, let the poor devil rise. I confess appearances were strong against me just now."

"Well, Captain, are you convinced by this time that I was not deceiving you?"

The Guerilla muttered some words of apology between his teeth, and while he shook the dust from his cloak, and arranged the broken feather of his hat, cast a look of scowling and indignant meaning upon Mike, whose rough treatment he had evidently not forgiven.

"Don't be looking at me that way, you black thief! or I'll —"

"Hold there!" said I; "no more of this. Come, gentlemen, we must be friends. If I mistake not, we've got something like refreshment at our bivouac. In any case you'll partake of our watch-fire till morning."

They gladly accepted our invitation, and ere half an hour elapsed Mike's performance in the part of host had completely erased every unpleasant impression his first appearance gave rise to; and as for myself, when I did sleep at last, the confused mixture of Spanish and Irish airs which issued from the thicket beside me, proved that a most intimate alliance had grown up between the parties.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MIKE'S MISTAKE.

An hour before daybreak the Guerillas were in motion, and having taken a most ceremonious leave of us, they mounted their horses and set out upon their journey. I saw their gaunt figures wind down the valley, and watched them till they disappeared in the distance. "Yes, brigands though they be," thought I, "there is something fine, something heroic in the spirit of their unrelenting vengeance." The sleuth-hound never sought the lair of his victim with a more ravening appetite for blood than they track the retreating columns of the enemy. Hovering around the line of march, they sometimes swoop down in masses, and carry off a part of the baggage, or the wounded. The wearied soldier, overcome by heat and exhaustion, who drops behind his ranks, is their certain victim; the sentry on an advanced post is scarcely less so. Whole pickets are sometimes attacked and carried off to a man; and when traversing the lonely passes of some mountain gorge, or defiling through the dense shadows of a wooded glen, the stoutest heart has felt a fear, lest from behind the rock that frowned above him, or from the leafy thicket whose branches stirred without a breeze, the sharp ring of a Guerilla carbine might sound his death-knell.

It was thus in the retreat upon Corunna fell Colonel Lefebvre. Ever foremost in the attack upon our rear-guard, this gallant youth (he was scarce six-and-twenty), a colonel of his regiment, and decorated with the Legion of Honor, he led on every charge of his bold "*sabreurs*," riding up to the very bayonets of our squares, waving his hat above his head, and seeming actually to court his death-wound; but so struck were our brave fellows with his gallant bearing, that they cheered him as he came on.

It was in one of these moments as, rising high in his stirrups, he bore down upon the unflinching ranks of the British infantry, the shrill whistle of a ball strewed the leaves upon the roadside, the exulting shout of a Guerilla followed it, and the same instant Lefebvre fell forward upon his horse's mane, a deluge of blood bursting from his bosom. A broken cry escaped his lips, — a last effort to cheer on his men; his noble charger galloped forward between our squares, bearing to us our prisoner, the corpse of his rider.

"Captain O'Malley," said a mounted dragoon to the advanced sentry at the bottom of the little hill upon which I was standing. "Despatches from headquarters, sir," delivering into my hands a large sealed packet from the adjutant-general's office. While he proceeded to search for another letter of which he was the bearer, I broke the seal and read as follows: —

ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE.
May 15.

SIR, — On the receipt of this order you are directed, having previously resigned your command to the officer next in seniority, to repair to headquarters at Fuentes d'Onoro, there to report yourself under arrest.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

GEORGE HOPETON,
Military Secretary.

"What the devil can this mean?" said I to myself, as I read the lines over again and again. "What have I done lately, or what have I left undone to involve me in this scrape? Ah!" thought I, "to be sure, it can be nothing else. Lord Wellington *did* recognize me that unlucky morning, and has determined not to let me pass unpunished. How unfortunate. Scarcely twenty-four hours have elapsed since fortune seemed to smile upon me from every side, and now the very destiny I most dreaded stares me fully in the face." A reprimand, or the sentence of a court-martial, I shrank from with a coward's fear. It mattered comparatively little from what source arising, the injury to my pride as a man and my spirit as a soldier would be almost the same.

"This is the letter, sir," said the orderly, presenting me with a packet, the address of which was in Power's handwriting. Eagerly tearing it open, I sought for something which might explain my unhappy position. It bore the same date as the official letter, and ran thus: —

My dear Charley, — I joined yesterday, just in time to enjoy the heartiest laugh I have had since our meeting. If notoriety can gratify you, by Jove, you have it; for Charles O'Malley and his man Mickey Free are bywords in every mess from Villa Formosa to the rear-guard. As it's only fair you should participate a little in the fun you've originated, let me explain the cause. Your inimitable man Mike, to whom it appears you intrusted the report of killed and wounded for the adjutant-general, having just at that moment accomplished a letter to his friends at home, substituted his correspondence for your returns, and doubtless, sent the list of the casualties as very interesting information to his sweetheart in Ireland. If such be the case, I hope and trust she has taken the blunder in better part than old Colbourn, who swears he'll bring you to a court-martial, under Heaven knows what charges. In fact, his passion has known no bounds since the event; and a fit of jaundice has given his face a kind of neutral tint between green and yellow, like nothing I know of except the facings of the "dirty half-hundred."[1]

As Mr. Free's letter may be as great a curiosity to you as it has been to us, I enclose you a copy of it, which Hopeton obtained for me. It certainly places the estimable Mike in a strong light as a despatch-writer. The occasional interruption to the current of the letter, you will perceive, arises from Mike having used the pen of a comrade, writing being, doubtless, an accomplishment forgotten in the haste of preparing Mr. Free for the world; and the amanuensis has, in more than one instance, committed to paper more than was meant by the author: —

Mrs. M'Gra, — Tear an' ages, sure I need not be treating her that way. Now, just say Mrs. Mary — ay, that'll do — Mrs. Mary, it's may be surprised you'll be to be reading a letter from your humble servant, sitting on the top of the Alps, — arrah, may be it's not the Alps; but sure she'll never know, — fornent the whole French army, with Bony himself and all his jinnerals — God be between us and harm — ready to murther every mother's son of us, av they were able, Molly darlin'; but, with the blessing of Providence, and Lord Wellington and Mister Charles, we'll bate them yet, as we bate them afore.

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[1] For the information of my unmilitary readers, I may remark that this sobriquet was applied to the 50th Regiment.

My lips is wathering at the thought o' the plunder. I often think of Tim Riley, that was hanged for sheep-stealing; he'd be worth his weight in gold here.

Mr. Charles is now a captain — devil a less — and myself might be somethin' that same, but ye see I was always of a bashful nature, and recommended the master in my place. "He's mighty young, Mister Charles is," says my Lord Wellington to me, — "He's mighty young, Mr. Free." "He is, my lord," says I; "he's young, as you obsarve, but he's as much divilment in him as many that might be his father." "That's somethin', Mr. Free," says my lord; "ye say he comes from a good stock?" "The *rale* sort, my lord," says I; "an ould, ancient family, that's spent every sixpence they had in treating their neighbors. My father lived near him for years," — you see, Molly, I said that to season the discourse. "We'll make him a captain," says my lord; "but, Mr. Free, could we do nothing for you?" "Nothing, at present, my lord. When my friends comes into power," says I, "they'll think of me. There's many a little thing to give away in Ireland, and they often find it mighty hard to find a man for lord-lieutenant; and if that same, or a tide-waiter's place was vacant —" "Just tell me," says my lord. "It's what I'll do," says I. "And now, wishing you happy dreams, I'll take my lave." Just so, Molly, it's hand and glove we are. A pleasant face, agreeable manners seasoned with natural modesty, and a good pair of legs, them's the gifts to push a man's way in the world. And even with the ladies — but sure I am forgetting, my master was proposed for, and your humble servant too, by two illigant creatures in Lisbon; but it would n't do, Molly, it's higher nor that we'll be looking, — *rale* princesses, the devil a less. Tell Kitty Hannigan I hope she's well; she was a disarving young woman in her situation in life. Shusey Dogherty, at the cross roads — if I don't forget the name — was a good-looking slip too; give her my affectionate salutations, as we say in the Portuguese. I hope I'll be able to bear the inclementuous nature of your climate when I go back; but I can't expect to stay long — for Lord Wellington can't do without me. We play duets on the guitar together every evening. The master is shouting for a blanket, so no more at present from,

Your very affectionate friend,

MICKEY FREE.

P. S. — I don't write this myself, for the Spanish tongue puts me out o' the habit of English. Tell Father Rush, if he'd study the Portuguese, I'd use my interest for him with the Bishop of Toledo. It's a country he'd like — no regular stations, but promiscuous eating and drinking, and as pretty girls as ever confessed their sins.

My poor Charley, I think I am looking at you. I think I can see the struggle between indignation and laughter, which every line of this letter inflicts upon you. Get back as quickly as you can, and we 'll try if Crawfurd won't pull you through the business. In any case, expect no sympathy; and if you feel disposed to be angry with all who laugh at you, you had better publish a challenge in the next general order. George Scott, of the Greys, bids me say, that if you 're hard up for cash, he 'll give you a couple of hundred for Mickey Free. I told him I thought you 'd accept it, as your uncle has the breed of those fellows upon his estate, and might have no objection to weed his stud. Hammersley 's gone back with the Dashwoods; but I don't think you need fear anything in that quarter. At the same time, if you wish for success, make a bold push for the peerage and half-a-dozen decorations, for Miss Lucy is most decidedly gone wild about military distinction. As for me, my affairs go on well: I 've had half-a-dozen quarrels with Inez, but we parted good friends, and my bad Portuguese has got me out of all difficulties with papa, who pressed me tolerably close as to fortune. I shall want your assistance in this matter yet. If parchments will satisfy him, I think I could get up a qualification; but somehow the matter must be done, for I 'm resolved to have his daughter.

The orderly is starting, so no more till we meet.

Yours ever, FRED POWER.

"Godwin," said I, as I closed the letter, "I find myself in a scrape at headquarters; you are to take the command of the detachment, for I must set out at once."

"Nothing serious, I hope, O'Malley?"

"Oh, no; nothing of consequence. A most absurd blunder of my rascally servant."

"The Irish fellow yonder?"

"The same."

"He seems to take it easily, however."

"Oh, confound him! he does not know what trouble he has involved me in; not that he 'll care much when he does."

"Why, he does not seem to be of a very desponding temperament. Listen to the fellow! I 'll be hanged, if he 's not singing!"

"I 'm devilishly disposed to spoil his mirth. They tell me, however, he always keeps the troop in good humor; and see, the fellows are actually cleaning his horses for him, while he is sitting on the bank!"

"Faith, O'Malley, that fellow knows the world. Just hear him."

Mr. Free was, as described, most leisurely reposing on a bank, a mug of something drinkable beside him, and a pipe of that curtailed proportion which an Irishman loves held daintily between his fingers. He appeared to be giving his directions to some soldiers of the troop, who were busily cleaning his horses and accoutrements for him.

"That's it, Jim! Rub 'em down along the hocks; he won't kick; it's only play. Scrub away, honey; that's the devil's own carbine to get clean."

"Well, I say, Mr. Free, are you going to give us that ere song?"

"Yes. I'll be danged if I burnish your sabre, if you don't sing."

"Tear an' ages! ain't I composing it? Av I was Tommy Moore, I could n't be quicker."

"Well, come along, my hearty; let's hear it."

"Oh, murther!" said Mike, draining the pot to its last few drops, which he poured pathetically upon the grass before him; and then having emptied the ashes from his pipe, he heaved a deep sigh, as though to say life had no pleasures in store for him. A brief pause followed, after which, to the evident delight of his expectant audience, he began the following song, to the popular air of "Paddy O'Carroll": —

BAD LUCK TO THIS MARCHING.

AIR,—*Paddy O'Carroll.*

Bad luck to this marching,
Pipe-claying, and starching,
How neat one must be to be killed by the French.
I 'm sick of parading,
Through wet and cowld wading,
Or standing all night to be shot in a trench.
To the tune of a fife
They dispose of your life,
You surrender your soul to some illigant lilt;
Now, I like Garryowen,
When I hear it at home,
But it 's not half so sweet when you 're going to be kilt

Then, though up late and early,
Our pay comes so rarely,
The devil a farthing we 've ever to spare;
They say some disaster
Befell the paymaster;
On my conscience, I think that the money 's not there.
And just think what a blunder,
They won't let us plunder,
While the convents invite us to rob them, 't is clear;
Though there is n't a village,
But cries, "Come and pillage,"
Yet we leave all the mutton behind for Mounseer.

Like a sailor that 's nigh land,
I long for that island
Where even the kisses we steal if we please;
Where it is no disgrace
If you don't wash your face,
And you 've nothing to do but to stand at your ease.

With no sergeant t' abuse us,
We fight to amuse us;
Sure, it's better bate Christians than kick a baboon.
How I 'd dance like a fairy
To see ould Dunleary,
And think twice ere I 'd leave it to be a dragoon!

"There 's a sweet little bit for you," said Mike, as he concluded; "thrown off as aisy as a game at football."

"I say, Mr. Free, the captain 's looking for you; he 's just received despatches from the camp, and wants his horses."

"In that case, gentlemen, I must take my leave of you; with the more regret, too, that I was thinking of treating you to a supper this evening. You need n't be laughing; it 's in earnest I am. Coming, sir, coming!" shouted he, in a louder tone, answering some imaginary call, as an excuse for his exit.

When he appeared before me, an air of most business-like alacrity had succeeded to his late appearance, and having taken my orders to get the horses in readiness, he left me at once, and in less than half an hour we were upon the road.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MONSOON IN TROUBLE.

As I rode along towards Fuentes d'Onoro, I could not help feeling provoked at the absurd circumstances in which I was involved. To be made the subject of laughter for a whole army was by no means a pleasant consideration; but what I felt far worse was the possibility that the mention of my name in connection with a reprimand might reach the ears of those who knew nothing of the cause.

Mr. Free himself seemed little under the influence of similar feelings; for when, after a silence of a couple of hours, I turned suddenly towards him with a half-angry look, and remarked, "You see, sir, what your confounded blundering has done," his cool reply was, —

"Ah, then! won't Mrs. M'Gra be frightened out of her life when she reads all about the killed and wounded in your honor's report? I wonder if they ever had the manners to send my own letter afterwards, when they found out their mistake!"

"*Their* mistake, do you say? rather *yours!* You appear to have a happy knack of shifting blame from your own shoulders. And do you fancy that they 've nothing else to do than to trouble their heads about your absurd letters?"

"Faith, it 's easily seen you never saw my letter, or you would n't be saying that. And sure, it 's not much trouble it would give Colonel Fitzroy or any o' the staff that write a good hand just to put in a line to Mrs. M'Gra, to prevent her feeling alarmed about that murthering paper. Well, well; it 's God's blessing! I don't think there 's anybody of the name of Mickey Free high up in the army but myself; so that the family won't be going into mourning for me on a false alarm."

I had not patience to participate in this view of the case; so that I continued my journey without speaking We had jogged along for some time after dark, when the distant twinkle of the watch-fires announced our approach to the camp. A detachment of the Fourteenth formed the advanced post, and from the officer in command I learned that Power was quartered at a small mill about half a mile distant; thither I accordingly turned my steps, but finding that the path which led abruptly down to it was broken and cut up in many places, I sent Mike back with the horses, and continued my way alone on foot.

The night was deliciously calm; and as I approached the little rustic mill, I could not help feeling struck with Power's taste in a billet.

A little vine-clad cottage, built close against a rock, nearly concealed by the dense foliage around it, stood beside a clear rivulet whose eddying current supplied water to the mill, and rose in a dew-like spray which sparkled like gems in the pale moonlight. All was still within, but as I came nearer I thought I could detect the chords of a guitar. "Can it be," thought I, "that Master Fred has given himself up to minstrelsy; or is it some little dress rehearsal for a serenade? But no," thought I, "that certainly is not Power's voice." I crept stealthily down the little path, and approached the window; the lattice lay open, and as the curtain waved to and fro with the night air, I could see plainly all who were in the room.

Close beside the window sat a large, dark-featured Spaniard, his hands crossed upon his bosom and his head inclined heavily forward, the attitude perfectly denoting deep sleep, even had not his cigar, which remained passively between his lips, ceased to give forth its blue smoke wreath. At a little distance from him sat a young girl, who, even by the uncertain light, I could perceive was possessed of all that delicacy of form and gracefulness of carriage which characterize her nation.

Her pale features — paler still from the contrast with her jet black hair and dark costume — were lit up with an expression of animation and enthusiasm as her fingers swept rapidly and boldly across the strings of a guitar.

"And you 're not tired of it yet?" said she, bending her head downwards towards one whom I now for the first time perceived.

Reclining carelessly at her feet, his arm leaning upon her chair, while his hand occasionally touched her taper fingers, lay my good friend, Master Fred Power. An undress jacket, thrown loosely open, and a black neck-cloth, negligently knotted, bespoke the easy *nonchalance* with which he prosecuted his courtship.

"Do sing it again ?" said he, pressing her fingers to his lips.

What she replied, I could not catch ; but Fred resumed : "No, no ; he never wakes. The infernal clatter of that mill is his lullaby."

"But your friend will be here soon," said she. "Is it not so ?"

"Oh, poor Charley ! I 'd almost forgotten him. By-the-bye, you must n't fall in love with him. There now, do not look angry ; I only meant that, as I knew he 'd be desperately smitten, you should n't let him fancy he got any encouragement."

"What would you have me do ?" said she, artlessly.

"I have been thinking over that, too. In the first place, you 'd better never let him hear you sing ; scarcely ever smile ; and as far as possible, keep out of his sight."

"One would think, Senhor, that all these precautions were to be taken more on my account than on his. Is he so very dangerous, then ?"

"Not a bit of it ! Good-looking enough he is, but, only a boy ; at the same time, a devilish bold one ! And he 'd think no more of springing through that window and throwing his arms round your neck, the very first moment of his arrival, than I should of whispering how much I love you."

"How very odd he must be ! I 'm sure I should like him."

"Many thanks to both for your kind hints ; and now to take advantage of them." So saying, I stepped lightly upon the window-sill, cleared the miller with one spring, and before Power could recover his legs or Margeritta her astonishment, I clasped her in my arms, and kissed her on either cheek.

"Charley ! Charley ! Damn it, man, it won't do !" cried

Fred; while the young lady, evidently more amused at his discomfiture than affronted at the liberty, threw herself into a seat, and laughed immoderately.

"Ha! Hilloa there! What is 't?" shouted the miller, rousing himself from his nap, and looking eagerly round. "Are they coming? Are the French coming?"

A hearty renewal of his daughter's laughter was the only reply; while Power relieved his anxiety by saying, —

"No, no, Pedrillo, not the French; a mere marauding party, — nothing more. I say, Charley," continued he, in a lower tone, "you had better lose no time in reporting yourself at headquarters. We 'll walk up together. Devilish awkward scrape, yours."

"Never fear, Fred; time enough for all that. For the present, if you permit me, I 'll follow up my acquaintance with our fair friend here."

"Gently, gently!" said he, with a look of most imposing seriousness. "Don't mistake her; she 's not a mere country girl: you understand? — been bred in a convent here, — rather superior kind of thing."

"Come, come, Fred, I 'm not the man to interfere with you for a moment."

"Good-night, Senhor," said the old miller, who had been waiting patiently all this time to pay his respects before going.

"Yes, that 's it!" cried Power, eagerly. "Good-night, Pedrillo."

"*Buonos noches*," lisped out Margeritta, with a slight curtsy.

I sprang forward to acknowledge her salutation, when Power coolly interposed between us, and closing the door after them, placed his back against it.

"Master Charley, I must read you a lesson —"

"You inveterate hypocrite, don't attempt this nonsense with *me*. But come, tell me how long you have been here?"

"Just twenty-four of the shortest hours I ever passed at an outpost. But listen, — do you know that voice? Is n't it O'Shaughnessy?"

"To be sure it is. Hear the fellow's song."

"My father cared little for shot or shell,
He laughed at death and dangers;
And he 'd storm the very gates of hell
With a company of the 'Rangers.'
So sing tow, row, row, row, row," etc.

"Ah, then, Mister Power, it 's twice I 'd think of returning your visit, if I knew the state of your avenue. If there 's a grand jury in Spain, they might give you a presentment for this bit of road. My knees are as bare as a commissary's conscience, and I 've knocked as much flesh off my shin-bones as would make a cornet in the hussars!"

A regular roar of laughter from both of us apprized Dennis of our vicinity.

"And it 's laughing ye are? Would n't it be as polite just to hold a candle or lantern for me in this confounded watercourse?"

"How goes it, Major?" cried I, extending my hand to him through the window.

"Charley — Charley O'Malley, my son! I 'm glad to see you. It 's a hearty laugh you gave us this morning. My friend Mickey 's a pleasant fellow for a secretary-at-war. But it 's all settled now; Crawfurd arranged it for you this afternoon."

"You don't say so! Pray tell me all about it."

"That 's just what I won't; for ye see I don't know it; but I believe old Monsoon's affair has put everything out of their heads."

"Monsoon's affair! What is that? Out with it, Dennis."

"Faith, I 'll be just as discreet about that as your own business. All I can tell you is, that they brought him up to headquarters this evening with a sergeant's guard, and they say he 's to be tried by court-martial; and Picton is in a blessed humor about it."

"What could it possibly have been? Some plundering affair, depend on it."

"Faith, you may swear it was n't for his little charities, as Dr. Pangloss calls them, they 've pulled him up," cried Power.

"Maurice is in high feather about it," said Dennis. "There are five of them up at Fuentes, making a list of the charges to send to Monsoon; for Bob Mahon, it seems, heard of the old fellow's doings up the mountains."

"What glorious fun!" said Power. "Let's haste and join them, boys."

"Agreed," said I. "Is it far from this?"

"Another stage. When we've got something to eat," said the major, "if Power has any intentions that way —"

"Well, I really did begin to fear Fred's memory was lapsing; but somehow, poor fellow, smiles have been more in his way than sandwiches lately."

An admonishing look from Power was his only reply, as he walked towards the door. Bent upon teasing him, however, I continued, —

"My only fear is, he may do something silly."

"Who? Monsoon, is it?"

"No, no. Not Monsoon; another friend of ours."

"Faith, I scarcely thought your fears of old Monsoon were called for. He's a fox — the devil a less."

"No, no, Dennis. I was n't thinking of him. My anxieties were for a most soft-hearted young gentleman, — one Fred Power."

"Charley, Charley!" said Fred, from the door, where he had been giving directions to his servant about supper. "A man can scarce do a more silly thing than marry in the army; all the disagreeables of married life, with none of its better features."

"Marry — marry!" shouted O'Shaughnessy, "upon my conscience, it's incomprehensible to me how a man can be guilty of it. To be sure, I don't mean to say that there are not circumstances, — such as half-pay, old age, infirmity, the loss of your limbs, and the like; but that, with good health and a small balance at your banker's, you should be led into such an embarrassment —"

"Men will flirt," said I, interrupting; "men will press taper fingers, look into bright eyes, and feel their witchery; and although the fair owners be only quizzing them half the time, and amusing themselves the other, and though they be the veriest hackneyed coquettes —"

"Did you ever meet the Dalrymple girls, Dennis?" said Fred, with a look I shall never forget.

What the reply was I cannot tell. My shame and confusion were overwhelming, and Power's victory complete.

"Here comes the prog," cried Dennis, as Power's servant entered with a very plausible-looking tray, while Fred proceeded to place before us a strong army of decanters.

Our supper was excellent, and we were enjoying ourselves to the utmost, when an orderly sergeant suddenly opened the door, and raising his hand to his cap, asked if Major Power was there.

"A letter for you, sir."

"Monsoon's writing, by Jove! Come, boys, let us see what it means. What a hand the old fellow writes! The letters look all crazy, and are tumbling against each other on every side. Did you ever see anything half so tipsy as the crossing of that *t?*"

"Read it. Read it out, Fred!"

Tuesday Evening.

DEAR POWER, — I 'm in such a scrape! Come up and see me at once, bring a little sherry with you, and we 'll talk over what 's to be done.

Yours ever,

B. MONSOON.

Quarter-General.

We resolved to finish our evening with the major; so that, each having armed himself with a bottle or two, and the remnants of our supper, we set out towards his quarters, under the guidance of the orderly. After a sharp walk of half an hour, we reached a small hut, where two sentries of the Eighty-eighth were posted at the door.

O'Shaughnessy procured admittance for us, and in we went. At a small table, lighted by a thin tallow candle, sat old Monsoon, who, the weather being hot, had neither coat nor wig on; an old cracked china tea-pot, in which as we found afterwards he had mixed a little grog, stood before him, and a large mass of papers lay scattered around on every side, — he himself being occupied in poring over their contents, and taking occasional draughts from his uncouth goblet.

As we entered noiselessly, he never perceived us, but continued to mumble over, in a low tone, from the documents before him: —

"Upon my life, it's like a dream to me! What infernal stuff this brandy is!"

Charge No. 8. — For conduct highly unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, in forcing the cellar of the San Nicholas convent at Banos, taking large quantities of wine therefrom, and subsequently compelling the prior to dance a bolero, thus creating a riot, and tending to destroy the harmony between the British and the Portuguese, so strongly inculcated to be preserved by the general orders.

"Destroy the harmony! Bless their hearts! How little they know of it! I've never passed a jollier night in the Peninsula! The prior's a trump, and as for the bolero, he *would* dance it. I hope they say nothing about my hornpipe."

Charge No. 9. — For a gross violation of his duty as an officer, in sending a part of his brigade to attack and pillage the alcalde of Banos; thereby endangering the public peace of the town, being a flagrant breach of discipline and direct violation of the articles of war.

"Well, I'm afraid I was rather sharp on the alcalde, but we did him no harm except the fright. What sherry the fellow had! 't would have been a sin to let it fall into the hands of the French."

Charge No. 10. — For threatening, on or about the night of the 3d, to place the town of Banos under contribution, and subsequently forcing the authorities to walk in procession before him, in absurd and ridiculous costumes.

"Lord, how good it was! I shall never forget the old alcalde! One of my fellows fastened a dead lamb round his neck, and told him it was the golden fleece. The commander-in-chief would have laughed himself if he had been there. Picton's much too grave, — never likes a joke."

Charge No. 11. — For insubordination and disobedience, in refusing to give up his sword, and rendering it necessary for the Portuguese guard to take it by force, — thereby placing himself in a situation highly degrading to a British officer.

"Did n't I lay about me before they got it! Who 's that? Who 's laughing there? Ah, boys, I 'm glad to see you! How are you, Fred? Well, Charley, I 've heard of your scrape; very sad thing for so young a fellow as you are. I don't think you 'll be broke; I 'll do what I can. I 'll see what I can do with Picton; we are very old friends, were at Eton together."

"Many thanks, Major; but I hear your own affairs are not flourishing. What 's all this court-martial about?"

"A mere trifle; some little insubordination in the legion. Those Portuguese are sad dogs. How very good of you, Fred, to think of that little supper."

While the major was speaking, his servant, with a dexterity the fruit of long habit, had garnished the table with the contents of our baskets, and Monsoon, apologizing for not putting on his wig, sat down among us with a face as cheerful as though the floor was not covered with the charges of the court-martial to be held on him.

As we chatted away over the campaign and its chances, Monsoon seemed little disposed to recur to his own fortunes. In fact, he appeared to suffer much more from what he termed my unlucky predicament than from his own mishaps. At the same time, as the evening wore on, and the sherry began to tell upon him, his heart expanded into its habitual moral tendency, and by an easy transition, he was led from the religious association of convents to the pleasures of pillaging them.

"What wine they have in their old cellars! It 's such fun drinking it out of great silver vessels as old as Methuselah. 'There 's much treasure in the house of the righteous,' as David says; and any one who has ever sacked a nunnery knows that."

"I should like to have seen that prior dancing the bolero," said Power.

"Was n't it good, though! He grew jealous of me, for I performed a hornpipe. Very good fellow the prior; not like the alcalde, — there was no fun in him. Lord bless him! he 'll never forget me."

"What did you do with him, Major?"

"Well, I 'll tell you; but you must n't let it be known, for I see they have not put it in the court-martial. Is there no more sherry there? There, that will do; I 'm always contented. 'Better a dry morsel with quietness,' as Moses says. Ay, Charley, never forget that 'a merry heart is just like medicine.' Job found out that, you know."

"Well, but the alcalde, Major."

"Oh! the alcalde, to be sure. These pious meditations make me forget earthly matters."

"This old alcalde at Banos, I found out, was quite spoiled by Lord Wellington. He used to read all the general orders, and got an absurd notion in his head that because we were his allies, we were not allowed to plunder. Only think, he used to snap his fingers at Beresford, did n't care twopence about the legion, and laughed outright at Wilson. So, when I was ordered down there, I took another way with him. I waited till night-fall, ordered two squadrons to turn their jackets, and sent forward one of my aides-de-camp, with a few troopers, to the alcalde's house. They galloped into the courtyard, blowing trumpets and making an infernal hubbub. Down came the alcalde in a passion. 'Prepare quarters quickly, and rations for eight hundred men.'

"'Who dares to issue such an order?' said he.

"The aide-de-camp whispered one word in his ear, and the old fellow grew pale as death. 'Is he here; is he coming, — is he coming?' said he, trembling from head to foot.

"I rode in myself at this moment looking thus, —

"'*Où est le malheureux?*' said I, in French, — you know I speak French like Portuguese."

"Devilish like, I 've no doubt," muttered Power.

"'*Pardon, gracias eccellenza!*' said the alcalde, on his knees."

"Who the deuce did he take you for, Major?"

"You shall hear; you'll never guess, though. Lord, I shall never forget it! He thought I was Marmont; my aide-de-camp told him so."

One loud burst of laughter interrupted the major at this moment, and it was some considerable time before he could continue his narrative.

"And do you really mean," said I, "that you personated the Duke de Raguse?"

"Did I not, though? If you had only seen me with a pair of great mustaches, and a drawn sabre in my hand, pacing the room up and down in presence of the assembled authorities. Napoleon himself might have been deceived. My first order was to cut off all their heads; but I commuted the sentence to a heavy fine. Ah, boys, if they only understood at headquarters how to carry on a war in the Peninsula, they 'd never have to grumble in England about increased taxation! How I 'd mulct the nunneries! How I 'd grind the corporate towns! How I 'd inundate the country with exchequer bills! I 'd sell the priors at so much a head, and put the nuns up to auction by the dozen."

"You sacrilegious old villain! But continue the account of your exploits."

"Faith, I remember little more. After dinner I grew somewhat mellow, and a kind of moral bewilderment, which usually steals over me about eleven o'clock, induced me to invite the alcalde and all the aldermen to come and sup. Apparently, we had a merry night of it, and when morning broke, we were not quite clear in our intellects. Hence came that infernal procession; for when the alcalde rode round the town with a paper cap, and all the aldermen after him, the inhabitants felt offended, it seems, and sent for a large Guerilla force, who captured me and my staff, after a very vigorous resistance. The alcalde fought like a trump for us, for I promised to make him Prefect of the Seine; but we were overpowered, disarmed, and carried off. The remainder you can read in the court-martial, for you may think that after sacking the town, drinking all night, and fighting in the morning, my memory was none of the clearest."

"Did you not explain that you were not the marshal-general?"

"No, faith, I knew better than that; they 'd have murdered me had they known their mistake. They brought me to headquarters in the hope of a great reward, and it was only when they reached this that they found out I was not the Duke de Raguse; so you see, boys, it's a very complicated business."

"'Gad, and so it is," said Power, "and an awkward one, too."

"He'll be hanged, as sure as my name's Dennis!" vociferated O'Shaughnessy, with an energy that made the major jump from his chair. "Picton will hang him!"

"I'm not afraid," said Monsoon; "they know me so well. Lord bless you, Beresford could n't get on without me!"

"Well, Major," said I, "in any case, you certainly take no gloomy nor desponding view of your case."

"Not I, boy. You know what Jeremiah says: 'a merry heart is a continual feast;' and so it is. I may die of repletion, but they'll never find me starved with sorrow."

"And, faith, it's a strange thing!" muttered O'Shaughnessy, thinking aloud; "a most extraordinary thing! An honest fellow would be sure to be hanged; and there's that old rogue, that's been melting down more saints and blessed Virgins than the whole army together, he'll escape. Ye'll see he will!"

"There goes the patrol," said Fred; "we must start."

"Leave the sherry, boys; you'll be back again. I'll have it put up carefully."

We could scarcely resist a roar of laughter as we said, "Good-night."

"Adieu, Major," said I; "we shall meet soon."

So saying, I followed Power and O'Shaughnessy towards their quarters.

"Maurice has done it beautifully!" said Power. "Pleasant revelations the old fellow will make on the court-martial, if he only remembers what we've heard to-night! But here we are, Charley; so good-night, and remember, you breakfast with me to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CONFIDENCE.

"I HAVE changed the venue, Charley," said Power, as he came into my room the following morning, — "I 've changed the venue, and come to breakfast with you."

I could not help smiling as a certain suspicion crossed my mind; perceiving which, he quickly added, —

"No, no, boy! I guess what you 're thinking of. I 'm not a bit jealous in that quarter. The fact is, you know, one cannot be too guarded."

"Nor too suspicious of one's friends, apparently."

"A truce with quizzing. I say, have you reported yourself?"

"Yes; and received this moment a most kind note from the general. But it appears I 'm not destined to have a long sojourn among you, for I 'm desired to hold myself in readiness for a journey this very day."

"Where the deuce are they going to send you now?"

"I 'm not certain of my destination. I rather suspect there are despatches for Badajos. Just tell Mike to get breakfast, and I 'll join you immediately."

When I walked into the little room which served as my *salon*, I found Power pacing up and down, apparently wrapped in meditation.

"I 've been thinking, Charley," said he, after a pause of about ten minutes, — "I 've been thinking over our adventures in Lisbon. Devilish strange girl that senhora! When you resigned in my favor, I took it for granted that all difficulty was removed. Confound it! I no sooner began to profit by your absence, in pressing my suit, than she turned short round, treated me with marked coldness, exhibited a hundred wilful and capricious fancies, and concluded one day by quietly confessing to me you were the only man she cared for."

"You are not serious in all this, Fred?" said I.

"Ain't I though, by Jove! I wish to Heaven I were not! My dear Charley, the girl is an inveterate flirt, — a decided coquette. Whether she has a particle of heart or not, I can't say; but certainly her greatest pleasure is to trifle with that of another. Some absurd suspicion that you were in love with Lucy Dashwood piqued her vanity, and the anxiety to recover a lapsing allegiance led her to suppose herself attached to you, and made her treat all my advances with the most frigid indifference or wayward caprice; the more provoking," continued he, with a kind of bitterness in his tone, "as her father was disposed to take the thing favorably; and, if I must say it, I felt devilish spooney about her myself.

"It was only two days before I left, that in a conversation with Don Emanuel, he consented to receive my addresses to his daughter on my becoming lieutenant-colonel. I hastened back with delight to bring her the intelligence, and found her with a lock of hair on the book before her, over which she was weeping. Confound me, if it was not yours! I don't know what I said, nor what she replied; but when we parted, it was with a perfect understanding we were never to meet again. Strange girl! She came that evening, put her arm within mine as I was walking alone in the garden, and half in jest, half in earnest, talked me out of all my suspicions, and left me fifty times more in love with her than ever. Egad! I thought I used to know something about women, but here is a chapter I 've yet to read. Come, now, Charley, be frank with me; tell me all you know."

"My poor Fred, if you were not head and ears in love, you would see as plainly as I do that your affairs prosper. And after all, how invariable is it that the man who has been the veriest flirt with women, — sighing, serenading, sonneteering, flinging himself at the feet of every pretty girl he meets with, — should become the most thorough dupe to his own feelings when his heart is really touched. Your man of eight-and-thirty is always the greatest fool about women."

"Confound your impertinence! How the devil can a fellow with a mustache not stronger that a Circassian's eyebrow read such a lecture *to me?*"

"Just for the very reason you've mentioned. You *glide* into an attachment at *my* time of life; you *fall* in love at *yours*."

"Yes," said Power, musingly, "there is some truth in that. This flirting is sad work. It is just like sparring with a friend; you put on the gloves in perfect good humor, with the most friendly intentions of exchanging a few amicable blows; you find yourself insensibly warm with the enthusiasm of the conflict, and some unlucky hard knock decides the matter, and it ends in a downright fight.

"Few men, believe me, are regular seducers; and among those who behave 'vilely' (as they call it), three-fourths of the number have been more sinned against than sinning. You adventure upon love as upon a voyage to India. Leaving the cold northern latitudes of first acquaintance behind you, you gradually glide into the warmer and more genial climate of intimacy. Each day you travel southward shortens the miles and the hours of your existence; so tranquil is the passage, and so easy the transition, you suffer no shock by the change of temperature about you. Happy were it for us that in our courtship, as in our voyage, there were some certain Rubicon to remind us of the miles we have journeyed! Well were it if there were some meridian in love!"

"I'm not sure, Fred, that there is not that same shaving process they practise on the line, occasionally performed for us by parents and guardians at home; and I'm not certain that the iron hoop of old Neptune is not a pleasanter acquaintance than the hair-trigger of some indignant and fire-eating brother. But come, Fred, you have not told me the most important point, — how fare your fortunes now; or in other words, what are your present prospects as regards the senhora?"

"What a question to ask me! Why not request me to tell you where Soult will fight us next, and when Marmont will cross the frontier? My dear boy, I have not seen her for a week, an entire week, — seven full days and nights, each with their twenty-four hours of change and vacillation."

"Well, then, give me the last bulletin from the seat of war; that at least you can do. Tell me how you parted."

"Strangely enough. You must know we had a grand dinner at the villa the day before I left; and when we adjourned for our coffee to the garden, my spirits were at the top of their bent. Inez never looked so beautiful, never was one half so gracious; and as she leaned upon my arm, instead of following the others towards the little summer-house, I turned, as if inadvertently, into a narrow, dark alley that skirts the lake."

"I know it well; continue."

Power reddened slightly, and went on: —

"'Why are we taking this path?' said Donna Inez; 'this is, surely, not a short way?'

"'Oh, I wished to make my adieux to my old friends the swans. You know I go to-morrow.'

"'Ah, that's true,' added she. 'I'd quite forgotten it.'

"This speech was not very encouraging; but as I felt myself in for the battle, I was not going to retreat at the skirmish. 'Now or never,' thought I. I'll not tell you what I said. I could n't, if I would. It is only with a pretty woman upon one's arm; it is only when stealing a glance at her bright eyes, as you bend beyond the border of her bonnet, — that you know what it is to be eloquent. Watching the changeful color of her cheek with a more anxious heart than ever did mariner gaze upon the fitful sky above him, you pour out your whole soul in love; you leave no time for doubt, you leave no space for reply. The difficulties that shoot across her mind you reply to ere she is well conscious of them; and when you feel her hand tremble, or see her eyelids fall, like the leader of a storming party when the guns slacken in their fire, you spring boldly forward in the breach, and blind to every danger around you, rush madly on, and plant your standard upon the walls."

"I hope you allow the vanquished the honors of war," said I, interrupting.

Without noticing my observation, he continued: —

"I was on my knee before her, her hand passively resting in mine, her eyes bent *upon* me softly and tearfully —"

"The game was your own, in fact."

"You shall hear.

"'Have we stood long enough thus, Senhor?' said she, bursting into a fit of laughter.

"I sprang to my legs in anger and indignation.

"'There, don't be passionate; it is so tiresome. What do you call that tree there?'

"'It is a tulip-tree,' said I, coldly.

"'Then, to put your gallantry to the test, do climb up there and pluck me that flower. No, the far one. If you fall into the lake and are drowned, why it would put an end to this foolish interview.'

"'And if not?' said I.

"'Oh, then I shall take twelve hours to consider of it; and if my decision be in your favor, I'll give you the flower ere you leave to-morrow.'

"It's somewhat about thirty years since I went bird-nesting, and hang me, if a tight jacket and spurs are the best equipment for climbing a tree; but up I went, and, amidst a running fire of laughter and quizzing, reached the branch and brought it down safely.

"Inez took especial care to avoid me the rest of the evening. We did not meet until breakfast the following morning. I perceived then that she wore the flower in her belt; but, alas! I knew her too well to augur favorably from that; besides that, instead of any trace of sorrow or depression at my approaching departure, she was in high spirits, and the life of the party. 'How can I manage to speak with her?' said I to myself. 'But one word, — I already anticipate what it must be; but let the blow fall — anything is better than this uncertainty.'

"'The general and the staff have passed the gate, sir,' said my servant at this moment.

"'Are my horses ready?'

"'At the door, sir; and the baggage gone forward.'

"I gave Inez one look —

"'Did you say more coffee?' said she, smiling.

"I bowed coldly, and rose from the table. They all assembled upon the terrace to see me ride away.

"'You'll let us hear from you,' said Don Emanuel.

"'And pray don't forget the letter to my brother,' cried old Madame Forjas.

"Twenty similar injunctions burst from the party, but not a word said Inez.

"'Adieu, then!' said I. 'Farewell.'

"'Adios! Go with God!' chorused the party.

"'Good-by, Senhora,' said I. 'Have *you* nothing to tell me ere we part?'

"'Not that I remember,' said she, carelessly. 'I hope you 'll have good weather.'

"'There is a storm threatening,' said I, gloomily.

"'Well, a soldier cares little for a wet jacket.'

"'Adieu!' said I, sharply, darting at her a look that spoke my meaning.

"'Farewell!' repeated she, curtsying slightly, and giving one of her sweetest smiles.

"I drove the spurs into my horse's flanks, but holding him firmly on the curb at the same moment, instead of dashing forward, he bounded madly in the air.

"'What a pretty creature!' said she, as she turned towards the house; then stopping carelessly, she looked round, —

"'Should you like this bouquet?'

"Before I could reply, she disengaged it from her belt, and threw it towards me. The door closed behind her as she spoke. I galloped on to overtake the staff, *et voilà tout.* Now, Charley, read my fate for me, and tell me what this portends."

"I confess I only see one thing certain in the whole."

"And that is?" said Power.

"That Master Fred Power is more irretrievably in love than any gentleman on full pay I ever met with."

"By Jove, I half fear as much! Is that orderly waiting for you, Charley? Who do you want my man?"

"Captain O'Malley, sir. General Crawfurd desires to see you at headquarters immediately."

"Come, Charley, I 'm going towards Fuentes. Take your cap; we 'll walk down together."

So saying, we cantered towards the village, where we separated, — Power to join some Fourteenth men stationed there on duty, and I to the general's quarters to receive my orders.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CANTONMENT.

Soon after this the army broke up from Caja, and went into cantonments along the Tagus, the headquarters being at Portalegre. We were here joined by four regiments of infantry lately arrived from England, and the 12th Light Dragoons. I shall not readily forget the first impression created among our reinforcements by the habits of our life at this period.

Brimful of expectation, they had landed at Lisbon, their minds filled with all the glorious expectancy of a brilliant campaign; sieges, storming, and battle-fields floated before their excited imagination. Scarcely, however, had they reached the camp, when these illusions were dissipated. Breakfasts, dinners, private theatricals, pigeon matches, formed our daily occupation. Lord Wellington's hounds threw off regularly twice a week; and here might be seen every imaginable species of equipment, from the artillery officer mounted on his heavy troop horse, to the infantry subaltern on a Spanish jennet. Never was anything more ludicrous than our turn-out. Every quadruped in the army was put into requisition. And even those who rolled not from their saddles from sheer necessity, were most likely to do so from laughing at their neighbors. The pace may not have equalled Melton, nor the fences have been as stubborn as in Leicestershire, but I'll be sworn there was more laughter, more fun, and more merriment, in one day with us, than in a whole season with the best organized pack in England. With a lively trust that the country was open and the leaps easy, every man took the field. Indeed, the only anxiety evinced at all, was to appear at the meet in something like jockey fashion, and I must confess that this feeling was particularly conspicuous among the infantry. Happy the man whose kit boasted a pair of cords or buckskins; thrice happy he who sported a pair of tops. I myself was in that enviable position, and well remember with what pride of heart I cantered up to cover in all the superior *éclat* of my costume, though, if truth were to be spoken, I doubt if I should have passed muster among my friends of the "Blazers." A round cavalry jacket and a foraging cap with a hanging tassel were the strange accompaniments of my more befitting nether garments. Whatever our costumes, the scene was a most animated one. Here the shell-jacket of a heavy dragoon was seen storming the fence of a vineyard; there the dark green of a rifleman was going the pace over the plain. The unsportsmanlike figure of a staff officer might be observed emerging from a drain, while some neck-or-nothing Irishman, with light infantry wings, was flying at every fence before him, and overturning all in his way. The rules and regulations of the service prevailed not here; the starred and gartered general, the plumed and aiguilletted colonel obtained but little deference and less mercy from his more humble subaltern. In fact, I am half disposed to think that many an old grudge of rigid discipline or severe duty met with its retribution here. More than once have I heard the muttered sentences around me which boded like this, —

"Go the pace, Harry, never flinch it! There's old Colquhoun — take him in the haunches; roll him over!"

"See here, boys — watch how I'll scatter the staff — Beg your pardon, General, hope I haven't hurt you. Turn about — fair play — I have taught *you* to take up a position now."

I need scarcely say there was one whose person was sacred from all such attacks. He was well mounted upon a strong, half-breed horse; rode always foremost, following the hounds with the same steady pertinacity with which he would have followed the enemy, his compressed lip rarely opening for a laugh when even the most ludicrous misadventure was enacting before him; and when by chance he would give way, the short ha! ha! was over in a moment, and the cold, stern features were as fixed and impassive as before.

All the excitement, all the enthusiasm of a hunting-field, seemed powerless to turn his mind from the preoccupation which the mighty interests he presided over, exacted. I remember once an incident which, however trivial in itself, is worth recording as illustrative of what I mean. We were going along at a topping pace, the hounds, a few fields in advance, were hidden from our view by a small beech copse. The party consisted of not more than six persons, one of whom was Lord Wellington himself. Our run had been a splendid one, and as we were pursuing the fox to earth, every man of us pushed his horse to his full stride in the hot enthusiasm of such a moment.

"This way, my lord, this way," said Colonel Conyers, an old Melton man, who led the way. "The hounds are in the valley; keep to the left." As no reply was made, after a few moments' pause Conyers repeated his admonition, "You are wrong, my lord, the hounds are hunting yonder."

"I know it!" was the brief answer given, with a shortness that almost savored of asperity; for a second or two not a word was spoken.

"How far is Niza, Gordon?" inquired Lord Wellington.

"About five leagues, my lord," replied the astonished aide-de-camp.

"That's the direction, is it not?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Let 's go over and inspect the wounded."

No more was said, and before a second was given for consideration, away went his lordship, followed by his aide-de-camp, his pace the same stretching gallop, and apparently feeling as much excitement, as he dashed onwards towards the hospital, as though following in all the headlong enthusiasm of a fox chase.

Thus passed our summer; a life of happy ease and recreation succeeding to the harassing fatigues and severe privations of the preceding campaign. Such are the lights and shadows of a soldier's life; such the checkered surface of his fortunes. Constituting, by their very change, that buoyant temperament, that happy indifference, which enables him to derive its full enjoyment from each passing incident of his career.

While thus we indulged in all the fascinations of a life of pleasure, the rigid discipline of the army was never for a moment forgotten. Reviews, parades, and inspections were of daily occurrence, and even a superficial observer could not fail to detect that under this apparent devotion to amusement and enjoyment, our commander-in-chief concealed a deep stroke of his policy.

The spirits of both men and officers, broken, in spite of their successes, by the incessant privations they had endured, imperatively demanded this period of rest and repose. The infantry, many of whom had served in the ill-fated campaign of Walcharen, were still suffering from the effects of the intermittent fever. The cavalry, from deficient forage, severe marches, and unremitting service, were in great part unfit for duty. To take the field under circumstances like these was therefore impossible; and with the double object of restoring their wonted spirit to his troops, and checking the ravages which sickness and the causalties of war had made within his ranks, Lord Wellington embraced the opportunity of the enemy's inaction to take up his present position on the Tagus.

But while we were enjoying all the pleasures of a country life, enhanced tenfold by daily association with gay and cheerful companions, the master-mind, whose reach extended from the profoundest calculations of strategy to minutest details of military organization, was never idle. Foreseeing that a period of inaction, like the present, must only be like the solemn calm that preludes the storm, he prepared for the future by those bold conceptions and unrivalled combinations which were to guide him through many a field of battle and of danger to end his career of glory in the liberation of the Peninsula.

The failure of the attack upon Badajos had neither damped his ardor nor changed his views; and he proceeded to the investment of Ciudad Rodrigo with the same intense determination of uprooting the French occupation in Spain by destroying their strongholds and cutting off their resources. Carrying aggressive war in one hand, he turned the other towards the maintenance of those defences which, in the event of disaster or defeat, must prove the refuge of the army.

To the lines of Torres Vedras he once more directed his attention. Engineer officers were despatched thither; the fortresses were put into repair; the bridges broken or injured during the French invasion were restored; the batteries upon the Tagus were rendered more effective, and furnaces for heating shot were added to them.

The inactivity and apathy of the Portuguese government but ill corresponded with his unwearied exertions; and despite of continual remonstrances and unceasing representations, the bridges over the Leira and Alva were left unrepaired, and the roads leading to them, so broken as to be almost impassable, might seriously have endangered the retreat of the army, should such a movement be deemed necessary.

It was in the first week of September I was sent with despatches for the engineer officer in command at the lines, and during the fortnight of my absence, was enabled for the first time to examine those extraordinary defences which, for the space of thirty miles, extended over a country undulating in hill and valley, and presenting, by a succession of natural and artificial resources, the strongest and most impregnable barrier that has ever been presented against the advance of a conquering army.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MICKEY FREE'S ADVENTURE.

When I returned to the camp, I found the greatest excitement prevailing on all sides. Each day brought in fresh rumors that Marmont was advancing in force; that sixty thousand Frenchmen were in full march upon Ciudad Rodrigo, to raise the blockade, and renew the invasion of Portugal. Intercepted letters corroborated these reports; and the Guerillas who joined us spoke of large convoys which they had seen upon the roads from Salamanca and Tamanes.

Except the light division, which, under the command of Crawfurd, were posted upon the right of the Aguada, the whole of our army occupied the country from El Bodon to Gallegos; the Fourth Division being stationed at Fuente Guenaldo, where some intrenchments had been hastily thrown up.

To this position Lord Wellington resolved upon retreating, as affording points of greater strength and more capability of defence than the other line of road, which led by Almeida upon the Coa. Of the enemy's intentions we were not long to remain in doubt; for on the morning of the 24th, a strong body were seen descending from the pass above Ciudad Rodrigo, and cautiously reconnoitring the banks of the Aguada. Far in the distance a countless train of wagons, bullock-cars, and loaded mules were seen winding their slow length along, accompanied by several squadrons of dragoons.

Their progress was slow, but as evening fell they entered the gates of the fortress; and the cheering of the garrison mixing with the strains of martial music, faint from distance, reached us where we lay upon the far-off heights of El Bodon. So long as the light lasted, we could perceive fresh troops arriving; and even when the darkness came on, we could detect the position of the reinforcing columns by the bright watch-fires which gleamed along the plain.

By daybreak we were under arms, anxiously watching for the intentions of our enemy, which soon became no longer dubious. Twenty-five squadrons of cavalry, supported by a whole division of infantry, were seen to defile along the great road from Ciudad Rodrigo to Guenaldo. Another column, equally numerous, marched straight upon Espeja; nothing could be more beautiful, nothing more martial, than their appearance: emerging from a close mountain gorge, they wound along the narrow road and appeared upon the bridge of the Aguada just as the morning sun was bursting forth, its bright beams tipping the polished cuirassiers and their glittering equipments, they shone in their panoply like the gay troop of some ancient tournament. The lancers of Berg, distinguished by their scarlet dolmans and gorgeous trappings, were followed by the Cuirassiers of the Guard, who again were succeeded by the *chasseurs à cheval*, their bright steel helmets and light-blue uniforms, their floating plumes and dappled chargers, looking the very *beau idéal* of light horsemen; behind, the dark masses of the infantry pressed forward and deployed into the plain; while, bringing up the rear, the rolling din, like distant thunder, announced the "dread artillery."

On they came, the seemingly interminable line converging on to that one spot upon whose summit now we assembled a force of scarcely ten thousand bayonets.

While this brilliant panorama was passing before our eyes, we ourselves were not idle. Orders had been sent to Picton to come up from the left with his division. Alten's cavalry and a brigade of artillery were sent to the front, and every preparation which the nature of the ground admitted was made to resist the advance of the enemy. While these movements on either side occupied some hours, the scene was every moment increasing in interest. The large body of cavalry was now seen forming into columns of attack. Nine battalions of infantry moved up to their support, and forming into columns, echelons, and squares, performed before us all the manœuvres of a review with the most admirable precision and rapidity; but from these our attention was soon taken by a brilliant display upon our left. Here, emerging from the wood which flanked the Aguada, were now to be seen the gorgeous staff of Marmont himself. Advancing at a walk, they came forward amidst the *vivas* of the assembled thousands, burning with ardor and thirsting for victory. For a moment, as I looked, I could detect the marshal himself, as, holding his plumed hat above his head, he returned the salute of a lancer regiment, who proudly waved their banners as he passed; but, hark, what are those clanging sounds which, rising high above the rest, seem like the war-cry of a warrior?

"I can't mistake those tones," said a bronzed old veteran beside me; "those are the brass bands of the Imperial Guard. Can Napoleon be there? See, there they come!" As he spoke, the head of a column emerged from the wood, and deploying as they came, poured into the plain. For above an hour that mighty tide flowed on, and before noon a force of sixty thousand men was collected in the space beneath us.

I was not long to remain an unoccupied spectator of this brilliant display, for I soon received orders to move down with my squadron to the support of the Eleventh Light Dragoons, who were posted at the base of the hill. The order at the moment was anything but agreeable, for I was mounted upon a hack pony, on which I had ridden over from Crawfurd's Division early in the morning, and suspecting that there might be some hot work during the day, had ordered Mike to follow with my horse. There was no time, however, for hesitation, and I moved my men down the slope in the direction of the skirmishers.

The position we occupied was singularly favorable, — our flanks defended on either side by brushwood, we could only be assailed in front; and here, notwithstanding our vast inferiority of force, we steadily awaited the attack. As I rode from out the thick wood, I could not help feeling surprised at the sounds which greeted me. Instead of the usual low and murmuring tones, the muttered sentences which precede a cavalry advance, — a roar of laughter shook the entire division, while exclamations burst from every side around me: "Look at him now!" "They have him, by heavens, they have him!" "Well done, well done!" "How the fellow rides!" "He's hit, he's hit!" "No, no!" "Is he down?" "He's down!"

A loud cheer rent the air at this moment, and I reached the front in time to learn the reason of all this excitement. In the wide plain before me a horseman was seen, having passed the ford of the Aguada, to advance at the top of his speed towards the British lines. As he came nearer, it was perceived that he was accompanied by a led horse, and apparently with total disregard of the presence of an enemy, rode boldly and carelessly forward. Behind him rode three lancers, their lances couched, their horses at speed; the pace was tremendous, and the excitement intense: for sometimes, as the leading horseman of the pursuit neared the fugitive, he would bend suddenly upon the saddle, and swerving to the right or the left, totally evade him, while again at others, with a loud cry of bold defiance, rising in his stirrups, he would press on, and with a shake of his bridle that bespoke the jockey, almost distance the enemy.

"That must be your fellow, O'Malley; that must be your Irish groom!" cried a brother officer. There could be no doubt of it. It was Mike himself.

"I'll be hanged, if he's not playing with them!" said Baker. "Look at the villain! He's holding in; that's more than the Frenchmen are doing. Look! look at the fellow on the gray horse! He has flung his trumpet to his back, and drawn his sabre."

A loud cheer burst from the French lines; the trumpeter was gaining at every stride. Mike had got into deep ground, and the horses would not keep together. "Let the brown horse go! Let him go, man!" shouted the dragoons, while I re-echoed the cry with my utmost might. But not so, Mike held firmly on, and spurring madly, he lifted his horse at each stride, turning from time to time a glance at his pursuer. A shout of triumph rose from the French side; the trumpeter was beside him; his arm was uplifted; the sabre above his head. A yell broke from the British, and with difficulty could the squadron be restrained. For above a minute the horses went side by side, but the Frenchman delayed his stroke until he could get a little in the front. My excitement had rendered me speechless; if a word could have saved my poor fellow, I could not have spoken. A mist seemed to gather across my eyes, and the whole plain and its peopled thousands danced before my vision.

"He's down!" "He's down, by heavens!" "No! no, no!" "Look there! Nobly done!" "Gallant fellow!" "He has him! he has him, by ——!" A cheer that rent the very air above us broke from the squadrons, and Mike galloped in among us, holding the Frenchman by the throat with one hand; the bridle of his horse he firmly grasped with his own in the other.

"How was it? How did he do it?"

"He broke his sword-arm with a blow, and the Frenchman's sabre fell to the earth."

"Here he is, Mister Charles; and musha, but it's trouble he gave me to catch him! And I hope your honor won't be displeased at me losing the brown horse. I was obliged to let him go when the thief closed on me; but sure, there he is! May I never, if he's not galloping into the lines by himself!" As he spoke, my brown charger came cantering up to the squadrons, and took his place in the line with the rest.

I had scarcely time to mount my horse, amidst a buzz of congratulations, when our squadron was ordered to the front. Mixed up with detachments from the Eleventh and Sixteenth, we continued to resist the enemy for about two hours.

Our charges were quick, sharp, and successive, pouring in our numbers wherever the enemy appeared for a moment to be broken, and then retreating under cover of our infantry when the opposing cavalry came down upon us in overwhelming numbers.

Nothing could be more perfect than the manner in which the different troops relieved each other during this part of the day. When the French squadrons advanced, ours met them as boldly. When the ground became no longer tenable, we broke and fell back, and the bayonets of the infantry arrested their progress. If the cavalry pressed heavily upon the squares, ours came up to the relief, and as they were beaten back, the artillery opened upon them with an avalanche of grape-shot.

I have seen many battles of greater duration and more important in result; many there have been in which more tactic was displayed, and greater combinations called forth, — but never did I witness a more desperate hand-to-hand conflict than on the heights of El Bodon.

Baffled by our resistance, Montbrun advanced with the Cuirassiers of the Guard. Riding down our advanced squadrons, they poured upon us like some mighty river, overwhelming all before it, and charged, cheering, up the heights. Our brave troopers were thrown back upon the artillery, and many of them cut down beside the guns. The artillerymen and the drivers shared the same fate, and the cannon were captured. A cheer of exultation burst from the French, and their *vivas* rent the air. Their exultation was short-lived, and that cheer their death-cry; for the Fifth Foot, who had hitherto lain concealed in the grass, sprang madly to their feet, their gallant Major Ridge at their head. With a yell of vengeance they rushed upon the foe; the glistening bayonets glanced amidst the cavalry of the French; the troops pressed hotly home; and while the cuirassiers were driven down the hill, the guns were recaptured, limbered up, and brought away. This brilliant charge was the first recorded instance of cavalry being assailed by infantry in line.

But the hill could no longer be held; the French were advancing on either flank; overwhelming numbers pressed upon the front, and retreat was unavoidable. The cavalry were ordered to the rear, and Picton's Division, throwing themselves into squares, covered the retreating movement.

The French dragoons bore down upon every face of those devoted battalions; the shouts of triumph cheered them as the earth trembled beneath their charge, — but the British infantry, reserving their fire until the sabres clanked with the bayonet, poured in a shattering volley, and the cry of the wounded and the groans of the dying rose from the smoke around them.

Again and again the French came on; and the same fate ever awaited them. The only movement in the British squares was closing up the spaces as their comrades fell or sank wounded to the earth.

At last reinforcements came up from the left; the whole retreated across the plain, until as they approached Guenaldo, our cavalry, having re-formed, came to their aid with one crushing charge, which closed the day.

That same night Lord Wellington fell back, and concentrating his troops within a narrow loop of land bounded on either flank by the Coa, awaited the arrival of the light division, which joined us at three in the morning.

The following day Marmont again made a demonstration of his force, but no attack followed. The position was too formidable to be easily assailed, and the experience of the preceding day had taught him that, however inferior in numbers, the troops he was opposed to were as valiant as they were ably commanded.

Soon after this, Marmont retired on the valley of the Tagus. Dorsenne also fell back, and for the present at least, no further effort was made to prosecute the invasion of Portugal.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SAN PETRO.

"Not badly wounded, O'Malley, I hope?" said General Crawfurd, as I waited upon him soon after the action.

I could not help starting at the question, while he repeated it, pointing at the same time to my left shoulder, from which a stream of blood was now flowing down my coat-sleeve.

"I never noticed it, sir, till this moment. It can't be of much consequence, for I have been on horseback the entire day, and never felt it.

"Look to it at once, boy; a man wants all his blood for this campaign. Go to your quarters. I shall not need you for the present; so pray see the doctor at once."

As I left the general's quarters, I began to feel sensible of pain, and before a quarter of an hour had elapsed, had quite convinced myself that my wound was a severe one. The hand and arm were swollen, heavy, and distended with hemorrhage beneath the skin; my thirst became great, and a cold, shuddering sensation passed over me from time to time.

I sat down for a moment upon the grass, and was just reflecting within myself what course I should pursue, when I heard the tramp of feet approaching. I looked up, and perceived some soldiers in fatigue dresses, followed by a few others who, from their noiseless gestures and sad countenances, I guessed were carrying some wounded comrade to the rear.

"Who is it, boys?" cried I.

"It's the major, sir, the Lord be good to him!" said a hardy-looking Eighty-eighth man, wiping his eye with the cuff of his coat as he spoke.

"Not your major? Not Major O'Shaughnessy?" said I, jumping up and rushing forward towards the litter. Alas, too true, it was the gallant fellow himself! There he lay, pale and cold; his bloodless cheek and parted lips looking like death itself. A thin blue rivulet trickled from his forehead, but his most serious wound appeared to be in the side; his coat was open, and showed a mass of congealed and clotted blood, from the midst of which, with every motion of the way, a fresh stream kept welling upward. Whether from the shock or my loss of blood or from both together, I know not, but I sank fainting to the ground.

It would have needed a clearer brain and a cooler judgment than I possessed to have conjectured where I was, and what had occurred to me, when next I recovered my senses. Weak, fevered, and with a burning thirst, I lay, unable to move, and could merely perceive the objects which lay within the immediate reach of my vision. The place was cold, calm, and still as the grave. A lamp, which hung high above my head, threw a faint light around, and showed me, within a niche of the opposite wall, the figure of a gorgeously dressed female; she appeared to be standing motionless, but as the pale light flickered upon her features, I thought I could detect the semblance of a smile. The splendor of her costume and the glittering gems which shone upon her spotless robe gleamed through the darkness with an almost supernatural brilliancy, and so beautiful did she look, so calm her pale features, that as I opened and shut my eyes and rubbed my lids, I scarcely dared to trust to my erring senses, and believe it could be real. What could it mean? Whence this silence; this cold sense of awe and reverence? Was it a dream; was it the fitful vision of a disordered intellect? Could it be death? My eyes were riveted upon that beautiful figure. I essayed to speak, but could not; I would have beckoned her towards me, but my hands refused their office. I felt I know not what charm she possessed to calm my throbbing brain and burning heart; but as I turned from the gloom and darkness around to gaze upon her fair brow and unmoved features, I felt like the prisoner who turns from the cheerless desolation of his cell, and looks upon the fair world and the smiling valleys lying sunlit and shadowed before him.

Sleep at length came over me; and when I awoke, the day seemed breaking, for a faint gray tint stole through a stained-glass window, and fell in many colored patches upon the pavement. A low muttering sound attracted me; I listened, it was Mike's voice. With difficulty raising myself upon one arm, I endeavored to see more around me. Scarcely had I assumed this position, when my eyes once more fell upon the white-clad figure of the preceding night. At her feet knelt Mike, his hands clasped, and his head bowed upon his bosom. Shall I confess my surprise, my disappointment! It was no other than an image of the blessed Virgin, decked out in all the gorgeous splendor which Catholic piety bestows upon her saints. The features, which the imperfect light and my more imperfect faculties had endowed with an expression of calm, angelic beauty, were, to my waking senses, but the cold and barren mockery of loveliness; the eyes, which my excited brain gifted with looks of tenderness and pity, stared with no speculation in them; yet contrasting my feelings of the night before, full as they were of their deceptions, with my now waking thoughts, I longed once more for that delusion which threw a dreamy pleasure over me, and subdued the stormy passions of my soul into rest and repose.

"Who knows," thought I, "but he who kneels yonder feels now as I did then? Who can tell how little the cold, unmeaning reality before him resembles the spiritualized creation the fervor of his love and the ardor of his devotion may have placed upon that altar? Who can limit or bound the depth of that adoration for an object whose attributes appeal not only to every sentiment of the heart, but also to every sense of the brain? I fancy that I can picture to myself how these tinselled relics, these tasteless waxworks, changed by the magic of devotion and of dread, become to the humble worshipper images of loveliness and beauty. The dim religious light; the reverberating footsteps echoed along those solemn aisles; the vaulted arches, into whose misty heights the sacred incense floats upward, while the deep organ is pealing its notes of praise or prayer, — these are no slight accessories to all the pomp and grandeur of a church whose forms and ceremonial, unchanged for ages and hallowed by a thousand associations, appeal to the mind of the humblest peasant or the proudest noble by all the weaknesses as by all the more favored features of our nature."

How long I might have continued to meditate in this strain I know not, when a muttered observation from Mike turned the whole current of my thoughts. His devotion over, he had seated himself upon the steps of the altar, and appeared to be resolving some doubts within himself concerning his late pious duties.

"Masses is dearer here than in Galway. Father Rush would be well pleased at two-and-sixpence for what I paid three doubloons for, this morning. And sure it 's droll enough. How expensive an amusement it is to kill the French! Here 's half a dollar I gave for the soul of a cuirassier that I kilt yesterday, and nearly twice as much for an artilleryman I cut down at the guns; and because the villain swore like a heythen, Father Pedro told me he 'd cost more nor if he died like a decent man."

At these words he turned suddenly round towards the Virgin, and crossing himself devoutly, added, —

"And sure it 's yourself knows if it 's fair to make me pay for devils that don't know their duties; and after all, if you don't understand English nor Irish, I've been wasting my time here this two hours."

"I say, Mike, how 's my friend the major! How 's Major O'Shaughnessy?"

"Charmingly, sir. It was only loss of blood that ailed him. A thief with a pike — one of the chaps they call Poles, bekase of the long sticks they carry with them — stuck the major in the ribs; but Doctor Quill — God reward him! he 's a great doctor and a funny divil too — he cured him in no time."

"And where is he now, Mike?"

"Just convanient, in a small chapel off the sacristy; and throuble enough we have to keep him quiet. He gave up the *con*fusion of roses, and took to punch; and faith, it is n't hymns nor paslams [psalms] he 's singing all night. And they had me there, mixing materials and singing songs, till I heard the bell for matins; and what between the punch and the prayers, I never closed my eyes."

"What do they call this convent?"

"It is a hard word, I misremember. It's something like saltpetre. But how's your honor? It's time to ask."

"Much better, Mike, much better. But as I see that either your drink or your devotion seems to have affected your nerves, you'd better lie down for an hour or two. I shall not want you."

"That's just what I can't; for you see I'm making a song for this evening. The Rangers has a little supper, and I'm to be there; and though I've made one, I'm not sure it'll do. May be your honor would give me your opinion about it?"

"With all my heart, Mike; let's hear it."

"Arrah, is it here, before the Virgin and the two blessed saints that's up there in the glass cases? But sure, when they make an hospital of the place, and after the major's songs last night — "

"Exactly so, Mike; out with it."

"Well, Ma'am," said he, turning towards the Virgin, "as I suspect you don't know English, may be you'll think it's my offices I'm singing. So, saving your favor, here it is."

MR. FREE'S SONG.

AIR, — "*Arrah, Catty, now can't you be asy?*"

Oh, what stories I'll tell when my sodgering's o'er,
  And the gallant Fourteenth is disbanded;
Not a drill nor parade will I hear of no more,
  When safely in Ireland landed.
With the blood that I spilt, the Frenchmen I kilt,
  I'll drive the young girls half crazy;
And some cute one will cry, with a wink of her eye,
 "Mister Free, now *why can't you be asy?*"

I'll tell how we routed the squadrons in fight,
  And destroyed them all at "Talavera,"
And then I'll just add how we finished the night,
  In learning to dance the "bolera;"

How by the moonshine we drank raal wine,
  And rose next day fresh as a daisy;
Then some one will cry, with a look mighty sly,
"Arrah, Mickey, *now can't you be asy?*"

I 'll tell how the nights with Sir Arthur we spent,
  Around a big fire in the air too,
Or may be enjoying ourselves in a tent,
  Exactly like Donnybrook fair too.
How he 'd call out to me: "Pass the wine, Mr. Free,
  For you 're a man never is lazy!"
Then some one will cry, with a wink of her eye,
"Arrah, Mickey, dear, *can't you be asy?*"

I 'll tell, too, the long years in fighting we passed,
  Till Mounseer asked Bony to lead him;
And Sir Arthur, grown tired of glory at last,
  Begged of one Mickey Free to succeed him.
"But, acushla," says I, "the truth is I 'm shy!
  There 's a lady in Ballymacrazy!
And I swore on the book —" He gave me a look,
  And cried: "Mickey, *now can't you be asy?*"

"Arrah, Mickey, now can't you be *asy?*" sang out a voice in chorus, and the next moment Dr. Quill himself made his appearance.

"Well, O'Malley, is it a penitential psalm you 're singing, or is my friend Mike endeavoring to raise your spirits with a Galway sonata?"

"A little bit of his own muse, Doctor, nothing more; but tell me, how goes it with the major, — is the poor fellow out of danger?"

"Except from the excess of his appetite, I know of no risk he runs. His servant is making gruel for him all day in a thing like the grog-tub of a frigate. But you 've heard the news, — Sparks has been exchanged. He came here last night; but the moment he caught sight of me, he took his departure. Begad, I 'm sure he 'd rather pass a month in Verdun than a week in my company!"

"By-the-bye, Doctor, you never told me how this same antipathy of Sparks for you had its origin."

"Sure I drove him out of the Tenth before he was three weeks with the regiment."

"Ay, I remember; you began the story for me one night on the retreat from the Coa, but something broke it off in the middle."

"Just so, I was sent for to the rear to take off some gentleman's legs that were n't in dancing condition; but as there's no fear of interruption now, I 'll finish the story. But first, let us have a peep at the wounded. What beautiful anatomists they are in the French artillery! Do you feel the thing I have now in my forceps? There, — don't jump, — that's a bit of the brachial nerve most beautifully displayed. Faith, I think I'll give Mike a demonstration."

"Oh, Mister Quill, dear! Oh, Doctor, darling!"

"Arrah, Mickey, now can't ye be asy?" sang out Maurice, with a perfect imitation of Mike's voice and manner.

"A little lint here! Bend your arm, — that's it — Don't move your fingers. Now, Mickey, make me a cup of coffee with a glass of brandy in it. And now, Charley, for Sparks. I believe I told you what kind of fellows the Tenth were, — regular out-and-outers. We had n't three men in the regiment that were not from the south of Ireland, — the *bocca Corkana* on their lips, fun and devilment in their eyes, and more drollery and humbug in their hearts than in all the messes in the service put together. No man had any chance among them if he was n't a real droll one; every man wrote his own songs and sang them too. It was no small promotion could tempt a fellow to exchange out of the corps. You may think, then, what a prize your friend Sparks proved to us; we held a court-martial upon him the week after he joined. It was proved in evidence that he had never said a good thing in his life, and had about as much notion of a joke as a Cherokee has of the Court of Chancery; and as to singing, Lord bless you, he had a tune with wooden turns to it, — it was most cruel to hear; and then the look of him, those eyes, like dropsical oysters, and the hair standing every way, like a field of insane flax, and the mouth with a curl in it like the slit in the side of a fiddle. A pleasant fellow that for a mess that always boasted the best-looking chaps in the service.

"'What's to be done with him?' said the major; 'shall we tell him we are ordered to India, and terrify him about his liver?'

"'Or drill him into a hectic fever?'

"'Or drink him dry?'

"'Or get him into a fight and wing him?'

"'Oh, no,' said I, 'leave him to me; we'll laugh him out of the corps.'

"'Yes, we'll leave him to you, Maurice,' said the rest.

"And that day week you might read in the 'Gazette,' 'Pierce Flynn O'Haygerty, to be Ensign, 10th Foot, *vice* Sparks, exchanged.'"

"But how was it done, Maurice; you haven't told me that."

"Nothing easier. I affected great intimacy with Sparks, bemoaned our hard fate, mutually, in being attached to such a regiment: 'A damnable corps this, — low, vulgar fellows, practical jokes; not the kind of thing one expects in the army. But as for me, I've joined it partly from necessity. You, however, who might be in a crack regiment, I can't conceive your remaining in it.'

"'But why did you join, Doctor?' said he; 'what necessity could have induced you?'

"'Ah, my friend,' said I, '*that* is the secret, — *that* is the hidden grief that must lie buried in my own bosom.'

"I saw that his curiosity was excited, and took every means to increase it farther. At length, as if yielding to a sudden impulse of friendship, and having sworn him to secrecy, I took him aside, and began thus, —

"'I may trust you, Sparks, I feel I may; and when I tell you that my honor, my reputation, my whole fortune is at stake, you will judge of the importance of the trust.'

"The goggle eyes rolled fearfully, and his features exhibited the most craving anxiety to hear my story.

"'You wish to know why I left the Fifty-sixth. Now I'll tell you; but mind, you're pledged, you're sworn, never to divulge it.'

"'Honor bright.'

"'There, that's enough; I'm satisfied. It was a slight infraction of the articles of war; a little breach of the rules and regulations of the service; a trifling misconception of the mess code, — they caught me one evening leaving the mess with — What do you think in my pocket? But you 'll never tell! No, no, I know you 'll not; eight forks and a gravy-spoon, — silver forks every one of them. There now,' said I, grasping his hand, 'you have my secret; my fame and character are in your hands, for you see they made me quit the regiment, — a man can't stay in a corps where he is laughed at.'

"Covering my face with my handkerchief, as if to conceal my shame, I turned away, and left Sparks to his meditations. That same evening we happened to have some strangers at mess; the bottle was passing freely round, and as usual the good spirits of the party at the top of their bent, when suddenly from the lower end of the table, a voice was heard demanding, in tones of the most pompous importance, permission to address the president upon a topic where the honor of the whole regiment was concerned.

"'I rise, gentlemen,' said Mr. Sparks, 'with feelings the most painful; whatever may have been the laxity of habit and freedom of conversation habitual in this regiment, I never believed that so flagrant an instance as this morning came to my ears —'

"'Oh, murder!' said I. 'Oh, Sparks, darling, sure you 're not going to tell?'

"'Doctor Quill,' replied he, in an austere tone, 'it is impossible for me to conceal it.'

"'Oh, Sparks, dear, will you betray me?'

"I gave him here a look of the most imploring entreaty, to which he replied by one of unflinching sternness.

"'I have made up my mind, sir,' continued he; 'it is possible the officers of this corps may look more leniently than I do upon this transaction; but know it they shall.'

"'Out with it, Sparks; tell it by all means!' cried a number of voices; for it was clear to every one, by this time, that he was involved in a hoax.

"Amidst, therefore, a confused volley of entreaty on one side, and my reiterated prayers for his silence, on the other, Sparks thus began: —

"'Are you aware, gentlemen, why Dr. Quill left the Fifty-sixth?'

"'No, no, no!' rang from all sides; 'let's have it!'

"'No, sir,' said he, turning towards me, 'concealment is impossible; an officer detected with the mess-plate in his pocket —'

"They never let him finish, for a roar of laughter shook the table from one end to the other; while Sparks, horror-struck at the lack of feeling and propriety that could make men treat such a matter with ridicule, glared around him on every side.

"'Oh, Maurice, Maurice!' cried the major, wiping his eyes, 'this is too bad; this is too bad!'

"'Gracious Heaven!' screamed Sparks, 'can you laugh at it?'

"'Laugh at it!' re-echoed the paymaster, 'God grant I only don't burst a blood-vessel!' And once more the sounds of merriment rang out anew, and lasted for several minutes.

"'Oh, Maurice Quill,' cried an old captain, 'you've been too heavy on the lad. Why, Sparks, man, he's been humbugging you.'

"Scarcely were the words spoken when he sprang from the room. The whole truth flashed at once upon his mind; in an instant he saw that he had exposed himself to the merciless ridicule of a mess-table and that all peace for him, in that regiment at least, was over.

"We got a glorious fellow in exchange for him; and Sparks descended into a cavalry regiment, — I ask your pardon, Charley, — where, as you are well aware, sharp wit and quick intellect are by no means indispensable. There now, don't be angry or you'll do yourself harm. So good-by, for an hour or two."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE COUNT'S LETTER.

O'Shaughnessy's wound, like my own, was happily only formidable from the loss of blood. The sabre or the lance are rarely, indeed, so death-dealing as the musket or the bayonet; and the murderous fire from a square of infantry is far more terrific in its consequences than the heaviest charge of a cavalry column. In a few weeks, therefore, we were once more about and fit for duty; but for the present the campaign was ended. The rainy season with its attendant train of sickness and sorrow set in. The troops were cantoned along the line of the frontier, — the infantry occupying the villages, and the cavalry being stationed wherever forage could be obtained.

The Fourteenth were posted at Avintas, but I saw little of them. I was continually employed upon the staff; and as General Crawfurd's activity suffered no diminution from the interruption of the campaign, rarely passed a day without eight or nine hours on horseback.

The preparations for the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo occupied our undivided attention. To the reduction of this fortress and of Badajos, Lord Wellington looked as the most important objects, and prosecuted his plans with unremitting zeal. To my staff appointment I owed the opportunity of witnessing that stupendous feature of war, a siege; and as many of my friends formed part of the blockading force, I spent more than one night in the trenches. Indeed, except for this, the tiresome monotony of life was most irksome at this period. Day after day the incessant rain poured down. The supplies were bad, scanty, and irregular; the hospitals crowded with sick; field-sports impracticable; books there were none; and a dulness and spiritless depression prevailed on every side. Those who were actively engaged around Ciudad Rodrigo had, of course, the excitement and interest which the enterprise involved: but even there the works made slow progress. The breaching artillery was defective in every way: the rain undermined the faces of the bastions; the clayey soil sank beneath the weight of the heavy guns; and the storms of one night frequently destroyed more than a whole week's labor had effected.

Thus passed the dreary months along; the cheeriest and gayest among us broken in spirit, and subdued in heart by the tedium of our life. The very news which reached us partook of the gloomy features of our prospects. We heard only of strong reinforcements marching to the support of the French in Estramadura. We were told that the Emperor, whose successes in Germany enabled him to turn his entire attention to the Spanish campaign, would himself be present in the coming spring, with overwhelming odds and a firm determination to drive us from the Peninsula.

In that frame of mind which such gloomy and depressing prospects are well calculated to suggest, I was returning one night to my quarters at Mucia, when suddenly I beheld Mike galloping towards me with a large packet in his hand, which he held aloft to catch my attention. "Letters from England, sir," said he, "just arrived with the general's despatches." I broke the envelope at once, which bore the war-office seal, and as I did so, a perfect avalanche of letters fell at my feet. The first which caught my eye was an official intimation from the Horse Guards that the Prince Regent had been graciously pleased to confirm my promotion to the troop, my commission to bear date from the appointment, etc., etc. I could not help feeling struck, as my eye ran rapidly across the lines, that although the letter came from Sir George Dashwood's office, it contained not a word of congratulation nor remembrance on his part, but was couched in the usual cold and formal language of an official document. Impatient, however, to look over my other letters, I thought but little of this; so, throwing them hurriedly into my sabretasche, I cantered on to my quarters without delay. Once more alone in silence, I sat down to commune with my far-off friends, and yet with all my anxiety to hear of home, passed several minutes in turning over the letters, guessing from whom they might have come, and picturing to myself their probable contents.

"Ah, Frank Webber, I recognize your slap-dash, bold hand without the aid of the initials in the corner; and this — what can this be? — this queer, misshapen thing, representing nothing save the forty-seventh proposition of Euclid, and the address seemingly put on with a cat's-tail dipped in lampblack? Yes, true enough, it is from Mister Free himself. And what have we here? This queer, quaint hand is no new acquaintance; how many a time have I looked upon it as the *ne plus ultra* of caligraphy! But here is one I 'm not so sure of. Who could have written this bolt-upright, old-fashioned superscription, not a letter of which seems on speaking terms with its neighbor? The very O absolutely turns its back upon the M in O'Malley, and the final Y wags his tail with a kind of independent shake, as if he did not care a curse for his predecessors! And the seal, too, — surely I know that griffin's head, and that stern motto, *Non rogo sed capio.* To be sure, it is Billy Considine's, the count himself. The very paper, yellow and time-stained, looks coeval with his youth; and I could even venture to wager that his sturdy pen was nibbed half a century since. I 'll not look farther among this confused mass of three-cornered billets, and long, treacherous-looking epistles, the very folding of which denote the dun. Here goes for the count!" So saying to myself, I drew closer to the fire, and began the following epistle: —

O'MALLEY CASTLE, November 3.

DEAR CHARLEY, — Here we sit in the little parlor with your last letter, the "Times," and a big map before us, drinking your health, and wishing you a long career of the same glorious success you have hitherto enjoyed. Old as I am — eighty-two or eighty-three (I forget which) in June — I envy you with all my heart. Luck has stood to you, my boy; and if a French sabre or a bayonet finish you now, you 've at least had a splendid burst of it. I was right in my opinion of you, and Godfrey himself owns it now, — a lawyer, indeed! Bad luck to them! we 've had enough of lawyers. There's old Hennesy, — honest Jack, as they used to call him, — that your uncle trusted for the last forty years, has raised eighteen thousand pounds on the title-deeds, and gone off to America. The old scoundrel! But it 's no use talking; the blow is a sore one to Godfrey, and the gout more troublesome than ever. Drumgold is making a motion in

Chancery about it, to break the sale, and the tenants are in open rebellion and swear they 'll murther a receiver, if one is sent down among them. Indeed, they came in such force into Galway during the assizes, and did so much mischief, that the cases for trial were adjourned, and the judges left with a military escort to protect them. This, of course, is gratifying to our feelings ; for, thank Providence, there is some good in the world yet. Kilmurry was sold last week for twelve thousand. Andy Blake would foreclose the mortgage, although we offered him every kind of satisfaction. This has done Godfrey a deal of harm; and some pitiful economy — taking only two bottles of claret after his dinner — has driven the gout to his head. They 've been telling him he 'd lengthen his days by this, and I tried it myself, and, faith, it was the longest day I ever spent in my life. I hope and trust you take your liquor like a gentleman and an Irish gentleman.

Kinshela, we hear, has issued an execution against the house and furniture ; but the attempt to sell the demesne nearly killed your uncle. It was advertised in a London paper, and an offer made for it by an old general whom you may remember when down here. Indeed, if I mistake not, he was rather kind to you in the beginning. It would appear he did not wish to have his name known, but we found him out, and such a letter as we sent him ! It 's little liking he 'll have to buy a Galway gentleman's estate over his head, that same Sir George Dashwood ! Godfrey offered to meet him anywhere he pleased, and if the doctor thought he could bear the sea voyage, he 'd even go over to Holyhead ; but the sneaking fellow sent an apologetic kind of a letter, with some humbug excuse about very different motives, etc. But we 've done with him, and I think he with us.

When I had read thus far, I laid down the letter, unable to go on ; the accumulated misfortunes of one I loved best in the world, following so fast one upon another, the insult — unprovoked, gratuitous insult — to him upon whom my hopes of future happiness so much depended, completely overwhelmed me. I tried to continue. Alas, the catalogue of evils went on ; each line bore testimony to some farther wreck of fortune, some clearer evidence of a ruined house.

All that my gloomiest and darkest forebodings had pictured was come to pass ; sickness, poverty, harassing unfeeling creditors, treachery, and ingratitude were goading to madness and despair a spirit whose kindliness of nature was unequalled. The shock of blasted fortunes was falling upon the dying heart; the convictions which a long life had never brought home — that men were false and their words a lie — were stealing over the man upon the brink of the grave; and he who had loved his neighbor like a brother was to be taught, at the eleventh hour, that the beings he trusted were perjured and forsworn.

A more unsuitable adviser than Considine, in difficulties like these, there could not be; his very contempt for all the forms of law and justice was sufficient to embroil my poor uncle still farther; so that I resolved at once to apply for leave, and if refused, and no other alternative offered, to leave the service. It was not without a sense of sorrow bordering on despair, that I came to this determination. My soldier's life had become a passion with me. I loved it for its bold and chivalrous enthusiasm, its hour of battle and strife, its days of endurance and hardship, its trials, its triumphs; its very reverses were endeared by those they were shared with; and the spirit of adventure and the love of danger — that most exciting of all gambling — had now entwined themselves in my very nature. To surrender all these at once, and to exchange the daily, hourly enthusiasm of a campaign for the prospects now before me, was almost maddening. But still a sustaining sense of duty of what I owed to him, who, in his love, had sacrified all for me, overpowered every other consideration. My mind was made up.

Father Rush's letter was little more than a recapitulation of the count's. Debt, distress, sickness, and the heart-burnings of altered fortunes filled it; and when I closed it, I felt like one over all whose views in life a dark and ill-omened cloud was closing forever. Webber's I could not read; the light and cheerful raillery of a friend would have seemed, at such a time, like the cold, unfeeling sarcasm of an enemy. I sat down at last to write to the general, enclosing my application for leave, and begging of him to forward it, with a favorable recommendation, to headquarters.

This done, I lay down upon my bed, and overcome by fatigue and fretting, fell asleep to dream of my home and those I had left there; which, strangely too, were presented to my mind with all the happy features that made them so dear to my infancy.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE TRENCHES.

"I HAVE not had time, O'Malley, to think of your application," said Crawfurd, "nor is it likely I can for a day or two. Read that." So saying, he pushed towards me a note, written in pencil, which ran thus: —

CIUDAD RODRIGO, December 18.

DEAR C., — Fletcher tells me that the breaches will be practicable by to-morrow evening, and I think so myself. Come over, then, at once, for we shall not lose any time.

Yours, W.

"I have some despatches for your regiment, but if you prefer coming along with me —"

"My dear General, dare I ask for such a favor?"

"Well, come along; only remember that, although my division will be engaged, I cannot promise you anything to do. So now, get your horses ready; let's away."

It was in the afternoon of the following day that we rode into the large plain before Ciudad Rodrigo, and in which the allied armies were now assembled to the number of twelve thousand men. The loud booming of the siege artillery had been heard by me for some hours before; but notwithstanding this prelude and my own high-wrought expectations, I was far from anticipating the magnificent spectacle which burst upon my astonished view. The air was calm and still; a clear, blue, wintry sky stretched overhead, but below, the dense blue smoke of the deafening guns rolled in mighty volumes along the earth, and entirely concealed the lower part of the fortress; above this the tall towers and battlemented parapets rose into the thin, transparent sky like fairy palaces. A bright flash of flame would now and then burst forth from the walls, and a clanging crash of the brass metal be heard; but the unceasing roll of our artillery nearly drowned all other sounds, save when a loud cheer would burst from the trenches, while the clattering fall of masonry, and the crumbling stones as they rolled down, bespoke the reason of the cry. The utmost activity prevailed on all sides; troops pressed forward to the reliefs in the parallels; ammunition wagons moved to the front; general and staff officers rode furiously about the plain; and all betokened that the hour of attack was no longer far distant.

While all parties were anxiously awaiting the decision of our chief, the general order was made known, which, after briefly detailing the necessary arrangements, concluded with the emphatic words, "Ciudad Rodrigo *must* be stormed tonight." All speculation as to the troops to be engaged in this daring enterprise was soon at an end; for with his characteristic sense of duty, Lord Wellington made no invidious selection, but merely commanded that the attack should be made by whatever divisions might chance to be that day in the trenches. Upon the Third and Light Divisions, therefore, this glorious task devolved. The former was to attack the main breach; to Crawfurd's Division was assigned the, if possible, more difficult enterprise of carrying the lesser one; while Pack's Portuguese Brigade were to menace the convent of La Caridad by a feint attack, to be converted into a real one, if circumstances should permit.

The decision, however matured and comprehensive in all its details, was finally adopted so suddenly that every staff officer upon the ground was actively engaged during the entire evening in conveying the orders to the different regiments. As the day drew to a close, the cannonade slackened on either side, a solitary gun would be heard at intervals, and in the calm stillness around, its booming thunder re-echoed along the valleys of the Sierra; but as the moon rose and night set in, these were no longer heard, and a perfect stillness and tranquillity prevailed around. Even in the trenches, crowded with armed and anxious soldiers, not a whisper was heard; and amidst that mighty host which filled the plain, the tramp of a patrol could be distinctly noted, and the hoarse voice of the French sentry upon the walls, telling that all was well in Ciudad Rodrigo.

The massive fortress, looming larger as its dark shadow stood out from the sky, was still as the grave; while in the greater breach a faint light was seen to twinkle for a moment, and then suddenly to disappear, leaving all gloomy and dark as before.

Having been sent with orders to the Third Division, of which the Eighty-eighth formed a part, I took the opportunity of finding out O'Shaughnessy, who was himself to lead an escalade party in M'Kinnon's Brigade. He sprang towards me as I came forward, and grasping my hand with a more than usual earnestness, called out, "The very man I wanted! Charley, my boy, do us a service now!"

Before I could reply, he continued in a lower tone, "A young fellow of ours, Harry Beauclerc, has been badly wounded in the trenches; but by some blunder, his injury is reported as a slight one, and although the poor fellow can scarcely stand, he insists upon going with the stormers."

"Come here, Major, come here!" cried a voice at a little distance.

"Follow me, O'Malley," cried O'Shaughnessy, moving in the direction of the speaker.

By the light of a lantern we could descry two officers kneeling upon the ground; between them on the grass lay the figure of a third, upon whose features, as the pale light fell, the hand of death seemed rapidly stealing. A slight froth, tinged with blood, rested on his lip, and the florid blood which stained the buff facing of his uniform indicated that his wound was through the lungs.

"He has fainted," said one of the officers, in a low tone.

"Are you certain it is fainting?" said the other, in a still lower.

"You see how it is, Charley," said O'Shaughnessy; "this poor boy must be carried to the rear. Will you then, like a kind fellow, hasten back to Colonel Campbell and mention the fact. It will kill Beauclerc should any doubt rest upon his conduct, if he ever recover this."

While he spoke, four soldiers of the regiment placed the wounded officer in a blanket. A long sigh escaped him, and he muttered a few broken words.

"Poor fellow, it 's his mother he 's talking of! He only joined a month since, and is a mere boy. Come, O'Malley, lose no time. By Jove! it is too late; there goes the first rocket for the columns to form. In ten minutes more the stormers must fall in."

"What 's the matter, Giles?" said he to one of the officers, who had stopped the soldiers as they were moving off with their burden, — "what is it?"

"I have been cutting the white tape off his arm; for if he sees it on waking, he'll remember all about the storming."

"Quite right — thoughtfully done!" said the other; "but who is to lead his fellows? He was in the forlorn hope."

"I 'll do it," cried I, with eagerness. "Come, O'Shaughnessy, you 'll not refuse me."

"Refuse you, boy!" said he, grasping my hand within both of his, "never! But you must change your coat. The gallant Eighty-eighth will never mistake their countryman's voice. But your uniform would be devilish likely to get you a bayonet through it; so come back with me, and we 'll make you a Ranger in no time."

"I can give your friend a cap."

"And I," said the other, "a brandy flask, which, after all, is not the worst part of a storming equipage."

"I hope," said O'Shaughnessy, "they may find Maurice in the rear. Beauclerc 's all safe in his hands."

"That they 'll not," said Giles, "you may swear. Quill is this moment in the trenches, and will not be the last man at the breach."

"Follow me now, lads," said O'Shaughnessy, in a low voice. "Our fellows are at the angle of this trench. Who the deuce can that be, talking so loud?"

"It must be Maurice," said Giles.

The question was soon decided by the doctor himself, who appeared giving directions to his hospital-sergeant.

"Yes, Peter, take the tools up to a convenient spot near the breach. There 's many a snug corner there in the ruins; and although we may n't have as good an operation-room as in old 'Steevens's,' yet we 'll beat them hollow in cases."

"Listen to the fellow," said Giles, with a shudder. "The thought of his confounded thumbscrews and tourniquets is worse to me than a French howitzer."

"The devil a kinder-hearted fellow than Maurice," said O'Shaughnessy, "for all that; and if his heart was to be known this moment, he'd rather handle a sword than a saw."

"True for you, Dennis," said Quill, overhearing him, "but we are both useful in our way, as the hangman said to Lord Clare."

"But should you not be in the rear, Maurice?" said I.

"You are right, O'Malley," said he, in a whisper; "but, you see, I owe the Cork Insurance Company a spite for making me pay a gout premium, and that's the reason I'm here. I warned them at the time that their stinginess would come to no good."

"I say, Captain O'Malley," said Giles, "I find I can't be as good as my word with you; my servant has moved to the rear with all my traps."

"What is to be done?" said I.

"Is it shaving utensils you want?" said Maurice. "Would a scalpel serve your turn?"

"No, Doctor, I'm going to take a turn of duty with your fellows to-night."

"In the breach, with the stormers?"

"With the forlorn hope," said O'Shaughnessy. "Beauclerc is so badly wounded that we've sent him back; and Charley, like a good fellow, has taken his place."

"Martin told me," said Maurice, "that Beauclerc was only stunned; but, upon my conscience, the hospital-mates, now-a-days, are no better than the watchmakers; they can't tell what's wrong with the instrument till they pick it to pieces. Whiz! there goes a blue light."

"Move on, move on," whispered O'Shaughnessy; "they're telling off the stormers. That rocket is the order to fall in."

"But what am I to do for a coat?"

"Take mine, my boy," said Maurice, throwing off an upper garment of coarse gray frieze as he spoke.

"There's a neat bit of uniform," continued he, turning himself round for our admiration; "don't I look mighty like the pictures of George the First at the battle of Dettingen!"

A burst of approving laughter was our only answer to this speech, while Maurice proceeded to denude himself of his most extraordinary garment.

"What, in the name of Heaven, is it?" said I.

"Don't despise it, Charley; it knows the smell of gunpowder as well as any bit of scarlet in the service;" while he added, in a whisper, "it's the ould Roscommon Yeomanry. My uncle commanded them in the year '42, and this was his coat. I don't mean to say that it was new then; for you see it's a kind of heirloom in the Quill family, and it's not every one I'd be giving it to."

"A thousand thanks, Maurice," said I, as I buttoned it on, amidst an ill-suppressed titter of laughter.

"It fits you like a sentry-box," said Maurice, as he surveyed me with a lantern. "The skirts separate behind in the most picturesque manner; and when you button the collar, it will keep your head up so high that the devil a bit you'll see except the blessed moon. It's a thousand pities you haven't the three-cocked hat with the feather trimming. If you wouldn't frighten the French, my name's not Maurice. Turn about here till I admire you. If you only saw yourself in a glass, you'd never join the dragoons again. And look now, don't be exposing yourself, for I wouldn't have those blue facings destroyed for a week's pay."

"Ah, then, it's yourself is the darling, Doctor, dear!" said a voice behind me. I turned round; it was Mickey Free, who was standing with a most profound admiration of Maurice beaming in every feature of his face. "It's yourself has a joke for every hour o' the day."

"Get to the rear, Mike, get to the rear with the cattle; this is no place for you or them."

"Good-night, Mickey," said Maurice.

"Good-night, your honor," muttered Mike to himself; "may I never die till you set a leg for me."

"Are you dressed for the ball?" said Maurice, fastening the white tape upon my arm. "There now, my boy, move on, for I think I hear Picton's voice; not that it signifies now, for he 's always in a heavenly temper when any one 's going to be killed. I 'm sure he 'd behave like an angel, if he only knew the ground was mined under his feet."

"Charley, Charley!" called out O'Shaughnessy, in a suppressed voice, "come up quickly!"

"No. 24, John Forbes — here! Edward Gillespie — here!"

"Who leads this party, Major O'Shaughnessy?"

"Mr. Beauclerc, sir,' replied O'Shaughnessy, pushing me forward by the arm while he spoke.

"Keep your people together, sir; spare the powder, and trust to your cold iron." He grasped my hand within his iron grip, and rode on.

"Who was it, Dennis?" said I.

"Don't you know him, Charley? That was Picton."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE STORMING OF CIUDAD RODRIGO.

WHATEVER the levity of the previous moment, the scene before us now repressed it effectually. The deep-toned bell of the cathedral tolled seven, and scarcely were its notes dying away in the distance, when the march of the columns was heard stealing along the ground. A low murmuring whisper ran along the advanced files of the forlorn hope; stocks were loosened; packs and knapsacks thrown to the ground; each man pressed his cap more firmly down upon his brow, and with lip compressed and steadfast eye, waited for the word to move.

It came at last: the word "March!" passed in whispers from rank to rank, and the dark mass moved on. What a moment was that as we advanced to the foot of the breach! The consciousness that at the same instant, from different points of that vast plain, similar parties were moving on; the feeling that at a word the flame of the artillery and the flash of steel would spring from that dense cloud, and death and carnage, in every shape our imagination can conceive, be dealt on all sides; the hurried, fitful thought of home; the years long past compressed into one minute's space; the last adieu of all we 've loved, mingling with the muttered prayer to Heaven, while, high above all, the deep pervading sense that earth has no temptation strong enough to turn us from that path whose ending must be a sepulchre!

Each heart was too full for words. We followed noiselessly along the turf, the dark figure of our leader guiding us through the gloom. On arriving at the ditch, the party with the ladders moved to the front. Already some haypacks were thrown in, and the forlorn hope sprang forward.

All was still and silent as the grave. "Quietly, my men, quietly!" said M'Kinnon; "don't press." Scarcely had he spoken when a musket whose charge, contrary to orders, had not been drawn, went off. The whizzing bullet could not have struck the wall, when suddenly a bright flame burst forth from the ramparts, and shot upward towards the sky. For an instant the whole scene before us was bright as noonday. On one side, the dark ranks and glistening bayonets of the enemy; on the other, the red uniform of the British columns: compressed like some solid wall, they stretched along the plain.

A deafening roll of musketry from the extreme right announced that the Third Division was already in action, while the loud cry of our leader, as he sprang into the trench, summoned us to the charge. The leading sections, not waiting for the ladders, jumped down, others pressing rapidly behind them, when a loud rumbling thunder crept along the earth, a hissing, crackling noise followed, and from the dark ditch a forked and livid lightning burst like the flame from a volcano, and a mine exploded. Hundreds of shells and grenades scattered along the ground were ignited at the same moment; the air sparkled with the whizzing fuses, the musketry plied incessantly from the walls, and every man of the leading company of the stormers was blown to pieces. While this dreadful catastrophe was enacting before our eyes, the different assaults were made on all sides; the whole fortress seemed girt around with fire. From every part arose the yells of triumph and the shouts of the assailants. As for us, we stood upon the verge of the ditch, breathless, hesitating, and horror-struck. A sudden darkness succeeded to the bright glare, but from the midst of the gloom the agonizing cries of the wounded and the dying rent our very hearts.

"Make way there! make way! here comes Mackie's party," cried an officer in the front, and as he spoke the forlorn hope of the Eighty-eighth came forward at a run; jumping recklessly into the ditch, they made towards the breach; the supporting division of the stormers gave one inspiring cheer, and sprang after them. The rush was tremendous; for scarcely had we reached the crumbling ruins of the rampart, when the vast column, pressing on like some mighty torrent, bore down upon our rear. Now commenced a scene to which nothing I ever before conceived of war could in any degree compare: the whole ground, covered with combustibles of every deadly and destructive contrivance, was rent open with a crash; the huge masses of masonry bounded into the air like things of no weight; the ringing clangor of the iron howitzers, the crackling of the fuses, the blazing splinters, the shouts of defiance, the more than savage yell of those in whose ranks alone the dead and the dying were numbered, made up a mass of sights and sounds almost maddening with their excitement. On we struggled; the mutilated bodies of the leading files almost filling the way.

By this time the Third Division had joined us, and the crush of our thickening ranks was dreadful; every moment some well-known leader fell dead or mortally wounded, and his place was supplied by some gallant fellow who, springing from the leading files, would scarcely have uttered his cheer of encouragement, ere he himself was laid low. Many a voice with whose notes I was familiar, would break upon my ear in tones of heroic daring, and the next moment burst forth in a death-cry. For above an hour the frightful carnage continued, fresh troops continually advancing, but scarcely a foot of ground was made; the earth belched forth its volcanic fires, and that terrible barrier did no man pass. In turn the bravest and the boldest would leap into the whizzing flame, and the taunting cheers of the enemy triumphed in derision at the effort.

"Stormers to the front! Only the bayonet! trust to nothing but the bayonet!" cried a voice whose almost cheerful accents contrasted strangely with the dead-notes around, and Gurwood, who led the forlorn hope of the Fifty-second, bounded into the chasm; all the officers sprang simultaneously after him; the men pressed madly on; a roll of withering musketry crashed upon them; a furious shout replied to it. The British, springing over the dead and dying, bounded like blood-hounds on their prey. Meanwhile the ramparts trembled beneath the tramp of the light division, who, having forced the lesser breach, came down upon the flank of the French. The garrison, however, thickened their numbers, and bravely held their ground. Man to man now was the combat. No cry for quarter, no supplicating look for mercy; it was the death struggle of vengeance and despair. At this instant an explosion louder than the loudest thunder shook the air; the rent and torn up ramparts sprang into the sky; the conquering and the conquered were alike the victims; for one of the greatest magazines had been ignited by a shell; the black smoke, streaked with a lurid flame, hung above the dead and the dying. The artillery and the murderous musketry were stilled, paralyzed, as it were, by the ruin and devastation before them. Both sides stood leaning upon their arms; the pause was but momentary; the cries of wounded comrades called upon their hearts. A fierce burst of vengeance rent the air; the British closed upon the foe; for one instant they were met; the next, the bayonets gleamed upon the ramparts, and Ciudad Rodrigo was won.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE RAMPART.

While such were the scenes passing around me, of my own part in them, I absolutely knew nothing; for until the moment that the glancing bayonets of the light division came rushing on the foe, and the loud, long cheer of victory burst above us, I felt like one in a trance. Then I leaned against an angle of the rampart, overpowered and exhausted; a bayonet wound, which some soldier of our own ranks had given me when mounting the breach, pained me somewhat; my uniform was actually torn to rags; my head bare; of my sword, the hilt and four inches of the blade alone remained, while my left hand firmly grasped the rammer of a cannon, but why or wherefore I could not even guess. As thus I stood, the unceasing tide of soldiery pressed on; fresh divisions came pouring in, eager for plunder, and thirsting for the spoil. The dead and the dying were alike trampled beneath the feet of that remorseless mass, who, actuated by vengeance and by rapine, sprang fiercely up the breach.

Weak and exhausted, faint from my wound, and overcome by my exertions, I sank among the crumbling ruin. The loud shouts which rose from the town, mingled with cries and screams, told the work of pillage was begun; while still a dropping musketry could be heard on the distant rampart, where even yet the French made resistance. At last even this was hushed, but to it succeeded the far more horrifying sounds of rapine and of murder; the forked flames of burning houses rose here and there amidst the black darkness of the night; and through the crackling of the timbers, and the falling crash of roofs, the heart-rending shriek of women rent the very air. Officers pressed forward, but in vain were their efforts to restrain their men; the savage cruelty of the moment knew no bounds of restraint. More than one gallant fellow perished in his fruitless endeavor to enforce obedience; and the most awful denunciations were now uttered against those before whom, at any other time, they dared not mutter.

Thus passed the long night, far more terrible to me than all the dangers of the storm itself, with all its death and destruction dealing around it. I know not if I slept: if so, the horrors on every side were pictured in my dreams; and when the gray dawn was breaking, the cries from the doomed city were still ringing in my ears. Close around me the scene was still and silent; the wounded had been removed during the night, but the thickly-packed dead lay side by side where they fell. It was a fearful sight to see them as, blood-stained and naked (for already the camp-followers had stripped the bodies), they covered the entire breach. From the rampart to the ditch, the ranks lay where they had stood in life. A faint phosphoric flame flickered above their ghastly corpses, making even death still more horrible. I was gazing steadfastly, with all that stupid intensity which imperfect senses and exhausted faculties possess, when the sound of voices near aroused me.

"Bring him along, — this way, Bob. Over the breach with the scoundrel, into the fosse."

"He shall die no soldier's death, by Heaven!" cried another and a deeper voice, "if I lay his skull open with my axe."

"Oh, mercy, mercy! as you hope for —"

"Traitor! don't dare to mutter here!" As the last words were spoken, four infantry soldiers, reeling from drunkenness, dragged forward a pale and haggard wretch, whose limbs trailed behind him like those of palsy; his uniform was that of a French chasseur, but his voice bespoke him English.

"Kneel down there, and die like a man! You were one once!"

"Not so, Bill, never. Fix bayonets, boys! That's right! Now take the word from me."

"Oh, forgive me! for the love of Heaven, forgive me!" screamed the voice of the victim; but his last accents ended in a death-cry, for as he spoke, the bayonets flashed for an instant in the air, and the next were plunged into his body. Twice I had essayed to speak, but my voice, hoarse from shouting, came not; and I could but look upon this terrible murder with staring eyes and burning brain. At last speech came, as if wrested by the very excess of my agony, and I muttered aloud, "O God!" The words were not well-spoken, when the muskets were brought to the shoulders, and reeking with the blood of the murdered man, their savage faces scowled at me as I lay.

A short and heartfelt prayer burst from my lips, and I was still. The leader of the party called out, "Be steady, and together. One, two! Ground arms, boys! Ground arms!" roared he, in a voice of thunder; "it 's the captain himself!" Down went the muskets with a crash; while, springing towards me, the fellows caught me in their arms, and with one jerk mounted me upon their shoulders, the cheer that accompanied the sudden movement seeming like the yell of maniacs. "Ha, ha, ha! we have him now!" sang their wild voices, as, with blood-stained hands and infuriated features, they bore me down the rampart. My sensations of disgust and repugnance to the party seemed at once to have evidenced themselves, for the corporal, turning abruptly round, called out, —

"Don't *pity* him, Captain; the scoundrel was a deserter; he escaped from the picket two nights ago, and gave information of all our plans to the enemy."

"Ay," cried another, "and what 's worse, he fired through an embrasure near the breach, for two hours, upon his own regiment. It was there we found him. This way, lads."

So saying, they turned short from the walls, and dashed down a dark and narrow lane into the town. My struggles to get free were perfectly ineffectual, and to my entreaties they were totally indifferent.

In this way, therefore, we made our entrance into the Plaza, where some hundred soldiers, of different regiments, were bivouacked. A shout of recognition welcomed the fellows as they came; while suddenly a party of Eighty eighth men, springing from the ground, rushed forward with drawn bayonets, calling out, "Give him up this minute, or, by the Father of Moses, we 'll make short work of ye!"

The order was made by men who seemed well disposed to execute it; and I was accordingly grounded with a shock and a rapidity that savored much more of ready compliance than any respect for my individual comfort. A roar of laughter rang through the motley mass, and every powder-stained face around me seemed convulsed with merriment. As I sat passively upon the ground, looking ruefully about, whether my gestures or my words heightened the absurdity of my appearance, it is hard to say; but certainly the laughter increased at each moment, and the drunken wretches danced round me in ecstasy.

"Where is your major? Major O'Shaughnessy, lads?" said I.

"He's in the church, with the general, your honor," said the sergeant of the regiment, upon whom the mention of his officer's name seemed at once to have a sobering influence. Assisting me to rise (for I was weak as a child), he led me through the dense crowd, who, such is the influence of example, now formed into line, and as well as their state permitted, gave me a military salute as I passed. "Follow me, sir," said the sergeant; "this little dark street to the left will take us to the private door of the chapel."

"Wherefore are they there, Sergeant?"

"There's a general of division mortally wounded."

"You did not hear his name?"

"No, sir. All I know is, he was one of the storming party at the lesser breach."

A cold, sickening shudder came over me; I durst not ask farther, but pressed on with anxious steps towards the chapel.

"There, sir, yonder, where you see the light. That's the door."

So saying, the sergeant stopped suddenly, and placed his hand to his cap. I saw at once that he was sufficiently aware of his condition not to desire to appear before his officers; so, hurriedly thanking him, I walked forward.

"Halt, there! and give the countersign," cried a sentinel, who with fixed bayonet stood before the door.

"I am an officer," said I, endeavoring to pass in.

"Stand bock, stand bock!" said the harsh voice of the Highlander, for such he was.

"Is Major O'Shaughnessy in the church?"

"I dinna ken," was the short, rough answer.

"Who is the officer so badly wounded?"

"I dinna ken," repeated he, as gruffly as before; while he added, in a louder key, "Stand bock, I tell ye, man! Dinna ye see the staff coming?"

I turned round hastily, and at the same instant several officers, who apparently from precaution had dismounted at the end of the street, were seen approaching. They came hurriedly forward, but without speaking. He who was in advance of the party wore a short, blue cape over an undress uniform. The rest were in full regimentals. I had scarcely time to throw a passing glance upon him, when the officer I have mentioned as coming first called out in a stern voice, —

"Who are you, sir?"

I started at the sounds; it was not the first time those accents had been heard by me.

"Captain O'Malley, Fourteenth Light Dragoons."

"What brings you here, sir? Your regiment is at Caya."

"I have been employed as acting aide-de-camp to General Crawfurd," said I, hesitatingly.

"Is that your staff uniform?" said he, as with compressed brow and stern look he fixed his eyes upon my coat. Before I had time to reply, or, indeed, before I well knew how to do so, a gruff voice from behind called out, —

"Damn me! if that ain't the fellow that led the stormers through a broken embrasure! I say, my lord, that's the yeoman I was telling you of. Is it not so, sir?" continued he, turning towards me.

"Yes, sir. I led a party of the Eighty-eight at the breach."

"And devilish well you did it, too!" added Picton, for it was he who recognized me. "I saw him, my lord, spring down from the parapet upon a French gunner, and break his sword as he cleft his helmet in two. Yes, yes; I shall not forget in a hurry how you laid about you with the rammer of the gun! By Jove! that's it he has in his hand!"

While Picton ran thus hurriedly on, Lord Wellington's calm but stern features never changed their expression. The looks of those around were bent upon me with interest and even admiration; but his evinced nothing of either.

Reverting at once to my absence from my post, he asked me, —

"Did you obtain leave for a particular service, sir?"

"No, my lord. It was simply from an accidental circumstance that —"

"Then, report yourself at your quarters as under arrest."

"But, my lord —" said Picton. Lord Wellington waited not for the explanation, but walked firmly forward, and strode into the church. The staff followed in silence, Picton turning one look of kindness on me as he went, as though to say, "I'll not forget you."

"The devil take it," cried I, as I found myself once more alone, "but I'm unlucky! What would turn out with other men the very basis of their fortune, is ever with me the source of ill-luck."

It was evident, from Picton's account, that I had distinguished myself in the breach; and yet nothing was more clear than that my conduct had displeased the commander-in-chief. Picturing him ever to my mind's eye as the *beau idéal* of a military leader, by some fatality of fortune I was continually incurring his displeasure, for whose praise I would have risked my life. "And this confounded costume — What, in the name of every absurdity, could have ever persuaded me to put it on. What signifies it, though a man should cover himself with glory, if in the end he is to be laughed at? Well, well, it matters not much, now my soldiering's over! And yet I could have wished that the last act of my campaigning had brought with it pleasanter recollections."

As thus I ruminated, the click of the soldier's musket near aroused me: Picton was passing out. A shade of gloom and depression was visible upon his features, and his lip trembled as he muttered some sentences to himself.

"Ha! Captain — I forget the name. Yes, Captain

O'Malley; you are released from arrest. General Crawfurd has spoken very well of you, and Lord Wellington has heard the circumstances of your case."

"Is it General Crawfurd, then, that is wounded, sir?" said I, eagerly.

Picton paused for a moment, while, with an effort, he controlled his features into their stern and impassive expression, then added hurriedly and almost harshly: —

"Yes, sir; badly wounded through the arm and in the lung. He mentioned you to the notice of the commander-in-chief, and your application for leave is granted. In fact, you are to have the distinguished honor of carrying back despatches. There, now; you had better join your brigade."

"Could I not see my general once more? It may be for the last time."

"No, sir!" sternly replied Picton. "Lord Wellington believes you under arrest. It is as well he should suppose you obeyed his orders."

There was a tone of sarcasm in these words that prevented my reply; and muttering my gratitude for his well-timed and kindly interference in my behalf, I bowed deeply and turned away.

"I say, sir!" said Picton, as he returned towards the church, "should anything befall, — that is, if, unfortunately, circumstances should make you in want and desirous of a staff appointment, remember that you are known to General Picton."

Downcast and depressed by the news of my poor general, I wended my way with slow and uncertain steps towards the rampart. A clear, cold, wintry sky and a sharp, bracing air made my wound, slight as it was, more painful, and I endeavored to reach the reserves, where I knew the hospital-staff had established, for the present, their quarters. I had not gone far when, from a marauding party, I learned that my man Mike was in search of me through the plain. A report of my death had reached him, and the poor fellow was half distracted.

Longing anxiously to allay his fears on my account, which I well knew might lead him into any act of folly or insanity, I pressed forward; besides — shall I confess it? — amidst the manifold thoughts of sorrow and affliction which weighed me down, I could not divest myself of the feeling that so long as I wore my present absurd costume, I could be nothing but an object of laughter and ridicule to all who met me.

I had not long to look for my worthy follower, for I soon beheld him cantering about the plain. A loud shout brought him beside me; and truly the poor fellow's delight was great and sincere. With a thousand protestations of his satisfaction, and reiterated assurances of what he would not have done to the French prisoners if anything had happened me, we took our way together towards the camp.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DESPATCH.

I WAS preparing to visit the town on the following morning, when my attention was attracted by a dialogue which took place beneath my window.

"I say, my good friend," cried a mounted orderly to Mike, who was busily employed in brushing a jacket, — "I say, are you Captain O'Malley's man?"

"The least taste in life o' that same," replied he, with a half-jocular expression.

"Well, then," said the other, "take up these letters to your master. Be alive, my fine fellow, for they are despatches, and I must have a written return for them."

"Won't ye get off and take a drop of somethin' refreshing; the air is cowld this morning."

"I can't stay, my good friend, but thank you all the same; so be alive, will you?"

"Arrah, there 's no hurry in life. Sure, it 's an invitation to dinner to Lord Wellington or a tea-party at Sir Denny's; sure, my master 's bothered with them every day o' th' week: that 's the misfortune of being an agreeable creature; and I 'd be led into dissipation myself, if I was n't rear'd prudent."

"Well, come along, take these letters, for I must be off; my time is short."

"That 's more nor your nose is, honey," said Mike, evidently piqued at the little effect his advances had produced upon the Englishman. "Give them here," continued he, while he turned the various papers in every direction, affecting to read their addresses.

"There 's nothing for me here, I see. Did none of the generals ask after me?"

"You *are* a queer one!" said the dragoon, not a little puzzled what to make of him.

Mike meanwhile thrust the papers carelessly into his pocket, and strode into the house, whistling a quick-step as he went, with the air of a man perfectly devoid of care or occupation. The next moment, however, he appeared at my door, wiping his forehead with the back of his hand, and apparently breathless with haste.

"Despatches, Mister Charles, despatches from Lord Wellington. The orderly is waiting below for a return."

"Tell him he shall have it in one moment," replied I. "And now bring me a light."

Before I had broken the seal of the envelope, Mike was once more at the porch.

"My master is writing a few lines to say he'll do it. Don't be talking of it," added he, dropping his voice, "but they want him to take another fortress."

What turn the dialogue subsequently took, I cannot say, for I was entirely occupied by a letter which accompanied the despatches. It ran as follows: —

QUARTER-GENERAL,
CIUDAD RODRIGO, Jan. 20, 1812.

DEAR SIR, — The commander-in-chief has been kind enough to accord you the leave of absence you applied for, and takes the opportunity of your return to England to send you the accompanying letters for his Royal Highness the Duke of York. To his approval of your conduct in the assault last night you owe this distinguished mark of Lord Wellington's favor, which, I hope, will be duly appreciated by you, and serve to increase your zeal for that service in which you have already distinguished yourself.

Believe me that I am most happy in being made the medium of this communication, and have the honor to be,

Very truly yours,

T. PICTON.

I read and re-read this note again and again. Every line was conned over by me, and every phrase weighed and balanced in my mind. Nothing could be more gratifying, nothing more satisfactory to my feelings; and I would not have exchanged its possession for the brevet of a lieutenant-colonel.

"Halloo, Orderly!" cried I, from the window, as I hurriedly sealed my few words of acknowledgment, "take this note back to General Picton, and here 's a guinea for yourself." So saying, I pitched into his ready hand one of the very few which remained to me in the world. "This is, indeed, good news!" said I, to myself. "This is, indeed, a moment of unmixed happiness!"

As I closed the window, I could hear Mike pronouncing a glowing eulogium upon my liberality, from which he could not, however, help in some degree detracting, as he added:

"But the devil thank him, after all! Sure, it 's himself has the illigant fortune and the fine place of it!"

Scarcely were the last sounds of the retiring horseman dying away in the distance, when Mike's meditations took another form, and he muttered between his teeth, "Oh, holy Agatha! a guinea, a raal gold guinea to a thief of a dragoon that come with the letter, and here am I wearing a picture of the holy family for a back to my waistcoat, all out of economy; and sure, God knows, but may be they 'll take their dealing trick out of me in purgatory for this hereafter; and faith, it 's a beautiful pair of breeches I 'd have had, if I was n't ashamed to put the twelve apostles on my legs."

While Mike ran on at this rate, my eyes fell upon a few lines of postscript in Picton's letter, which I had not previously noticed.

> "The official despatches of the storming are, of course, intrusted to senior officers, but I need scarcely remind you that it will be a polite and proper attention to his Royal Highness to present your letters with as little delay as possible. Not a moment is to be lost on your landing in England."

"Mike!" cried I, "how look the cattle for a journey?"

"The chestnut is a little low in flesh, but in great wind, your honor; and the black horse is jumping like a filly."

"And Badger?" said I.

"Howld him, if you can, that 's all; but it 's murthering work this, carrying despatches day after day."

"This time, however, Mike, we must not grumble."

"May be it is n't far?"

"Why, as to that, I shall not promise much. I 'm bound for England, Mickey."

"For England!"

"Yes, Mike, and for Ireland."

"For Ireland! whoop!" shouted he, as he shied his cap into one corner of the room, the jacket he was brushing into the other, and began dancing round the table with no bad imitation of an Indian war dance.

> "How I'll dance like a fairy,
> To see ould Dunleary,
> And think twice ere I leave it to be a dragoon."

"Oh, blessed hour! Is n't it beautiful to think of the illuminations and dinners and speeches and shaking of hands, huzzaing, and hip-hipping. May be there won't be pictures of us in all the shops, — Mister Charles and his man Mister Free. May be they won't make plays out of us; myself dressed in the gray coat with the red cuffs, the cords, the tops, and the Caroline hat a little cocked, with a phiz in the side of it." Here he made a sign with his expanded fingers to represent a cockade, which he designated by this word. "I think I see myself dining with the corporation, and the Lord Major of Dublin getting up to propose the health of the hero of El Bodon, Mr. Free; and three times three, hurra! hurra! hurra! Musha, but it 's dry I am gettin' with the thoughts of the punch and the poteen negus."

"If you go on at this rate, we 're not likely to be soon at our journey's end. So be alive now; pack up my kit; I shall start by twelve o'clock."

With one spring Mike cleared the stairs, and overthrowing everything and everybody in his way, hurried towards the stable, chanting at the top of his voice the very poetical strain he had indulged me with a few minutes before.

My preparations were rapidly made; a few hurried lines of leave-taking to the good fellows I had lived so much with and felt so strongly attached to, with a firm assurance that I should join them again ere long, was all that my time permitted. To Power I wrote more at length, detailing the circumstances which my own letters informed me of, and also those which invited me to return home. This done, I lost not another moment, but set out upon my journey.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE LEAVE.

After an hour's sharp riding we reached the Aguada, where the river was yet fordable; crossing this, we mounted the Sierra by a narrow and winding pass which leads through the mountains towards Almeida. Here I turned once more to cast a last and farewell look at the scene of our late encounter. It was but a few hours that I had stood almost on the same spot, and yet how altered was all around. The wide plain, then bustling with all the life and animation of a large army, was now nearly deserted, — some dismounted guns, some broken-up, dismantled batteries, around which a few sentinels seemed to loiter rather than to keep guard; a strong detachment of infantry could be seen wending their way towards the fortress, and a confused mass of camp-followers, sutlers, and peasants following their steps for protection against the pillagers and the still ruder assaults of their own Guerillas. The fortress, too, was changed indeed. Those mighty walls before whose steep sides the bravest fell back baffled and beaten, were now a mass of ruin and decay; the muleteer could be seen driving his mule along through the rugged ascent of that breach to win whose top the best blood of Albion's chivalry was shed; and the peasant child looked timidly from those dark enclosures in the deep fosse below, where perished hundreds of our best and bravest. The air was calm, clear, and unclouded; no smoke obscured the transparent atmosphere; the cannon had ceased; and the voices that rang so late in accents of triumphant victory were stilled in death. Everything, indeed, had undergone a mighty change; but nothing brought the altered fortunes of the scene so vividly to my mind as when I remembered that when last I had seen those walls, the dark shako of the French grenadiers peered above their battlements, and now the gay tartan of the Highlanders fluttered above them, and the red flag of England waved boldly in the breeze.

Up to that moment my sensations were those of unmixed pleasure. The thought of my home, my friends, my country, the feeling that I was returning with the bronze of the battle upon my cheek, and the voice of praise still ringing in my heart, — these were proud thoughts, and my bosom heaved short and quickly as I revolved them; but as I turned my gaze for the last time towards the gallant army I was leaving, a pang of sorrow, of self-reproach, shot through me, and I could not help feeling how far less worthily was I acting in yielding to the impulse of my wishes, than had I remained to share the fortunes of the campaign.

So powerfully did these sensations possess me, that I sat motionless for some time, uncertain whether to proceed; forgetting that I was the bearer of important information, I only remembered that by my own desire I was there; my reason but half convinced me that the part I had adopted was right and honorable, and more than once my resolution to proceed hung in the balance. It was just at this critical moment of my doubts that Mike, who had been hitherto behind, came up.

"Is it the upper road, sir?" said he, pointing to a steep and rugged path which led by a zigzag ascent towards the crest of the mountain.

I nodded in reply, when he added: —

"Does n't this remind your honor of Sleibh More, above the Shannon, where we used to be grouse shooting? And there's the keeper's house in the valley; and that might be your uncle, the master himself, waving his hat to you."

Had he known the state of my conflicting feelings at the moment, he could not more readily have decided this doubt. I turned abruptly away, put spurs to my horse, and dashed up the steep pass at a pace which evidently surprised, and as evidently displeased, my follower.

How natural it is ever to experience a reaction of depression and lowness after the first burst of unexpected joy! The moment of happiness is scarce experienced ere come the doubts of its reality, the fears for its continuance; the higher the state of pleasurable excitement, the more painful and the more pressing the anxieties that await on it; the tension of delighted feelings cannot last, and our overwrought faculties seek repose in regrets. Happy he who can so temper his enjoyments as to view them in their shadows as in their sunshine; he may not, it is true, behold the landscape in the blaze of its noonday brightness, but he need not fear the thunder-cloud nor the hurricane. The calm autumn of *his* bliss, if it dazzle not in its brilliancy, will not any more be shrouded in darkness and in gloom.

My first burst of pleasure over, the thought of my uncle's changed fortunes pressed deeply on my heart, and a hundred plans suggested themselves in turn to my mind to relieve his present embarrassments; but I knew how impracticable they would all prove when opposed by his prejudices. To sell the old home of his forefathers, to wander from the roof which had sheltered his name for generations, he would never consent to; the law might by force expel him, and drive him a wanderer and an exile, but of his own free will the thing was hopeless. Considine, too, would encourage rather than repress such feelings; his feudalism would lead him to any lengths; and in defence of what he would esteem a right, he would as soon shoot a sheriff as a snipe, and, old as he was, ask for no better amusement than to arm the whole tenantry and give battle to the king's troops on the wide plain of Scariff. Amidst such conflicting thought, I travelled on moodily and in silence, to the palpable astonishment of Mike, who could not help regarding me as one from whom fortune met the most ungrateful returns. At every new turn of the road he would endeavor to attract my attention by the objects around, — no white-turreted château, no tapered spire in the distance, escaped him; he kept up a constant ripple of half-muttered praise and censure upon all he saw, and instituted unceasing comparisons between the country and his own, in which, I am bound to say, Ireland rarely, if ever, had to complain of his patriotism.

When we arrived at Almeida, I learned that the "Medea" sloop-of-war was lying off Oporto, and expected to sail for England in a few days. The opportunity was not to be neglected. The official despatches, I was aware, would be sent through Lisbon, where the "Gorgon" frigate was in waiting to convey them; but should I be fortunate enough to reach Oporto in time, I had little doubt of arriving in England with the first intelligence of the fall of Ciudad Rodrigo. Reducing my luggage, therefore, to the smallest possible compass, and having provided myself with a juvenile guide for the pass of La Reyna, I threw myself, without undressing, upon the bed, and waited anxiously for the break of day to resume my journey.

As I ruminated over the prospect my return presented, I suddenly remembered Frank Webber's letter, which I had hastily thrust into a portfolio without reading, so occupied was I by Considine's epistle; with a little searching I discovered it, and trimming my lamp, as I felt no inclination to sleep, I proceeded to the examination of what seemed a more than usually voluminous epistle. It contained four closely-written pages, accompanied by something like a plan in an engineering sketch. My curiosity becoming further stimulated by this, I sat down to peruse it. It began thus: —

Official Despatch of Lieutenant-General Francis Webber to Lord Castlereagh, detailing the assault and capture of the old pump, in Trinity College, Dublin, on the night of the second of December, eighteen hundred and eleven, with returns of killed, wounded, and missing, with other information from the seat of war.

HEADQUARTERS, NO. 2, OLD SQUARE.

MY LORD, — In compliance with the instructions contained in your lordship's despatch of the twenty-first ultimo, I concentrated the force under my command, and assembling the generals of division, made known my intentions in the following general order: —

A. G. O.

The following troops will this evening assemble at headquarters, and having partaken of a sufficient dinner for the next two days, with punch for four, will hold themselves in readiness to march in the following order: —

Harry Nesbitt's Brigade of Incorrigibles will form a blockading force, in the line extending from the vice-provost's house to the library. The light division, under Mark Waller, will skirmish from the gate towards the middle of the square, obstructing the march of the Cuirassiers of the

Guard, which, under the command of old Duncan the porter, are expected to move in that direction. Two columns of attack will be formed by the senior sophisters of the Old Guard, and a forlorn hope of the "cautioned" men at the last four examinations will form, under the orders of Timothy O'Rourke, beneath the shadow of the dining-hall.

At the signal of the dean's bell the stormers will move forward. A cheer from the united corps will then announce the moment of attack.

The word for the night will be, "May the Devil admire me!"

The commander-of-the-forces desires that the different corps should be as strong as possible, and expects that no man will remain, on any pretence whatever, in the rear with the lush. During the main assault, Cecil Cavendish will make a feint upon the provost's windows, to be converted into a real attack if the ladies scream.

GENERAL ORDER.

The commissary-general, Foley, will supply the following articles for the use of the troops: Two hams; eight pair of chickens, the same to be roasted; a devilled turkey; sixteen lobsters; eight hundred of oysters, with a proportionate quantity of cold sherry and hot punch.

The army will get drunk by ten o'clock to-night.

Having made these dispositions, my lord, I proceeded to mislead the enemy as to our intentions, in suffering my servant to be taken with an intercepted despatch. This, being a prescription by Doctor Colles, would convey to the dean's mind the impression that I was still upon the sick list. This being done, and four canisters of Dartford gunpowder being procured on tick, our military chest being in a most deplorable condition, I waited for the moment of attack.

A heavy rain, accompanied with a frightful hurricane, prevailed during the entire day, rendering the march of the troops who came from the neighborhood of Merrion Square and Fitzwilliam Street, a service of considerable fatigue. The outlying pickets in College Green, being induced probably by the inclemency of the season, were rather tipsy on joining, and having engaged in a skirmish with old M'Calister, tying his red uniform over his head, the moment of attack was precipitated, and we moved to the trenches by half-past nine o'clock.

Nothing could be more orderly, nothing more perfect, than the march of the troops. As we approached the corner of the commons-hall, a skirmish on the rear apprised us that our intentions had become known; and I soon learned from my aide-de-camp, Bob Moore, that the attack was made by a strong column of the enemy, under the command of old Fitzgerald.

Perpendicular (as your lordship is aware he is styled by the army) came on in a determined manner, and before many minutes had elapsed had taken several prisoners, among others Tom Drummond,

— Long Tom, — who, having fallen on all fours, was mistaken for a long eighteen. The success, however, was but momentary; Nesbitt's Brigade attacked them in flank, rescued the prisoners, extinguished the dean's lantern, and having beaten back the heavy porters, took Perpendicular himself prisoner.

An express from the left informed me that the attack upon the provost's house had proved equally successful; there wasn't a whole pane of glass in the front, and from a footman who deserted, it was learned that Mrs. Hutchinson was in hysterics.

While I was reading this despatch, a strong feeling of the line towards the right announced that something was taking place in that direction. Bob Moore, who rode by on Drummond's back, hurriedly informed me that Williams had put the lighted end of his cigar to one of the fuses, but the powder, being wet, did not explode notwithstanding his efforts to effect it. Upon this, I hastened to the front, where I found the individual in question kneeling upon the ground, and endeavoring, as far as punch would permit him, to kindle a flame at the portfire. Before I could interfere, the spark had caught; a loud, hissing noise followed; the different magazines successively became ignited, and at length the fire reached the great four-pound charge.

I cannot convey to your lordship, by any words of mine, an idea of this terrible explosion; the blazing splinters were hurled into the air, and fell in fiery masses on every side from the park to King William; Ivey the bell-ringer, was precipitated from the scaffold beside the bell, and fell headlong into the mud beneath; the surrounding buildings trembled at the shock; the windows were shattered, and in fact a scene of perfect devastation ensued on all sides.

When the smoke cleared away, I rose from my recumbent position, and perceived with delight that not a vestige of the pump remained. The old iron handle was imbedded in the wall of the dining-hall, and its round knob stood out like the end of a queue.

Our loss was, of course, considerable; and ordering the wounded to the rear, I proceeded to make an orderly and regular retreat. At this time, however, the enemy had assembled in force. Two battalions of porters, led on by Dr. Dobbin, charged us on the flank; a heavy brigade poured down upon us from the battery, and but for the exertions of Harry Nesbitt, our communication with our reserves must have been cut off. Cecil Cavendish also came up; for although beaten in his great attack, the forces under his command had penetrated by the kitchen windows, and carried off a considerable quantity of cold meat.

Concentrating the different corps, I made an echelon movement upon the chapel, to admit of the light division coming up. This they did in a few moments, informing me that they had left Perpendicular in the haha, which, as your lordship is aware, is a fosse of the very greenest and most stagnant nature. We now made good our retreat upon number "2," carrying our wounded with us. The plunder we also secured; but we kicked the prisoners, and suffered them to escape.

Thus terminated, my lord, one of the brightest achievements of the undergraduate career. I enclose a list of the wounded, as also an account of the various articles returned in the commissary-general's list.

Harry Nesbitt: severely wounded; no coat nor hat; a black-eye; left shoe missing.

Cecil Cavendish: face severely scratched; supposed to have received his wound in the attack upon the kitchen.

Tom Drummond: not recognizable by his friends; his features resembling a transparency disfigured by the smoke of the preceding night's illumination.

Bob Moore: slightly wounded.

I would beg particularly to recommend all these officers to your lordship's notice; indeed, the conduct of Moore, in kicking the dean's lantern out of the porter's hand, was marked by great promptitude and decision. This officer will present to H. R. H. the following trophies, taken from the enemy: The dean's cap and tassel; the key of his chambers; Dr. Dobbin's wig and bands; four porters' helmets, and a book on the cellar.

I have the honor to remain, my lord, etc.,

Francis Webber.

G. O.

The commander-of-the-forces returns his thanks to the various officers and soldiers employed in the late assault, for their persevering gallantry and courage. The splendor of the achievement can only be equalled by the humanity and good conduct of the troops. It only remains for him to add, that the less they say about the transaction, and the sooner they are severally confined to their beds with symptoms of contagious fever, the better.

Meanwhile, to concert upon the future measures of the campaign, the army will sup to-night at Morrison's.

Here ended this precious epistle, rendering one fact sufficiently evident, — that, however my worthy friend advanced in years, he had not grown in wisdom.

While ruminating upon the strange infatuation which could persuade a gifted and an able man to lavish upon dissipation and reckless absurdity the talents that must, if well directed, raise him to eminence and distinction, a few lines of a newspaper paragraph fell from the paper I was reading. It ran thus: —

LATE OUTRAGE IN TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

We have great pleasure in stating that the serious disturbance which took place within the walls of our University a few evenings since, was in no wise attributable to the conduct of the students. A party of ill-disposed townspeople were, it would appear, the instigators and perpetrators of the outrage. That their object was the total destruction of our venerated University there can be but little doubt. Fortunately, however, they did not calculate upon the *esprit de corps* of the students, a body of whom, under the direction of Mr. Webber, successfully opposed the assailants, and finally drove them from the walls.

It is, we understand, the intention of the board to confer some mark of approbation upon Mr. Webber, who, independently of this, has strong claims upon their notice, his collegiate success pointing him out as the most extraordinary man of his day.

This, my dear Charley, will give you some faint conception of one of the most brilliant exploits of modern days. The bulletin, believe me, is not Napoleonized into any bombastic extravagance of success. The thing was splendid; from the brilliant firework of the old pump itself, to the figure of Perpendicular dripping with duckweed, like an insane river-god, it was unequalled. Our fellows behaved like trumps; and to do them justice, so did the enemy. But unfortunately, notwithstanding this, and the plausible paragraphs of the morning papers, I have been summoned before the board for Tuesday next.

Meanwhile I employ myself in throwing off a shower of small squibs for the journals, so that if the board deal not mercifully with me, I may meet with sympathy from the public I have just despatched a little editorial bit for the "Times," calling, in terms of parental tenderness, upon the University to say —

"How long will the extraordinary excesses of a learned functionary be suffered to disgrace college? Is Doctor —— to be permitted to exhibit an example of more riotous insubordination than would be endured in an undergraduate? More on this subject hereafter."

"'Saunders' News-letter.' — Dr. Barret appeared at the head police-office, before Alderman Darley, to make oath that neither he nor Catty were concerned in the late outrage upon the pump." etc., etc.

Paragraphs like these are flying about in every provincial paper of the empire. People shake their heads when they speak of the University, and respectable females rather cross over by King William and the Bank than pass near its precincts.

Tuesday Evening.

Would you believe it, they 've expelled me! Address your next letter as usual, for they have n't got rid of me yet.

Yours, F. W.

"So I shall find him in his old quarters," thought I, "and evidently not much altered since we parted." It was not without a feeling of (I trust pardonable) pride that I thought over my own career in the interval. My three years of campaigning life had given me some insight into the world, and some knowledge of myself, and conferred upon me a boon, of which I know not the equal, — that, while yet young, and upon the very threshold of life, I should have tasted the enthusiastic pleasures of a soldier's fortune, and braved the dangers and difficulties of a campaign at a time when, under other auspices, I might have wasted my years in unprofitable idleness or careless dissipation.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LONDON.

Twelve hours after my arrival in England I entered London. I cannot attempt to record the sensations which thronged my mind as the din and tumult of that mighty city awoke me from a sound sleep I had fallen into in the corner of the chaise. The seemingly interminable lines of lamplight, the crash of carriages, the glare of the shops, the buzz of voices, made up a chaotic mass of sights and sounds, leaving my efforts at thought vain and fruitless.

Obedient to my instructions, I lost not a moment in my preparations to deliver my despatches. Having dressed myself in the full uniform of my corps, I drove to the Horse Guards. It was now nine o'clock, and I learned that his Royal Highness had gone to dinner at Carlton House. In a few words which I spoke with the aide-de-camp, I discovered that no information of the fall of Ciudad Rodrigo had yet reached England. The greatest anxiety prevailed as to the events of the Peninsula, from which no despatches had been received for several weeks past.

To Carlton House I accordingly bent my steps, without any precise determination how I should proceed when there, nor knowing how far etiquette might be an obstacle to the accomplishment of my mission. The news of which I was the bearer was, however, of too important a character to permit me to hesitate, and I presented myself to the aide-de-camp in waiting, simply stating that I was intrusted with important letters to his Royal Highness, the purport of which did not admit of delay

"They have not gone to dinner yet," lisped out the aide-de-camp, "and if you would permit me to deliver the letters — "

"Mine are despatches," said I, somewhat proudly, and in no way disposed to cede to another the honor of personally delivering them into the hands of the duke.

"Then you had better present yourself at the levee to-morrow morning," replied he, carelessly, while he turned into one of the window recesses, and resumed the conversation with one of the gentlemen-in-waiting.

I stood for some moments uncertain and undecided; reluctant on the one part to relinquish my claim as the bearer of the despatches, and equally unwilling to defer their delivery till the following day.

Adopting the former alternative, I took my papers from my sabretasche, and was about to place them in the hands of the aide-de-camp, when the folding-doors at the end of the apartment suddenly flew open, and a large and handsome man with a high bald forehead entered hastily.

The different persons in waiting sprang from their lounging attitudes upon the sofas, and bowed respectfully as he passed on towards another door. His dress was a plain blue coat, buttoned to the collar, and his only decoration a brilliant star upon the breast. There was that air, however, of high birth and bearing about him that left no doubt upon my mind he was of the blood royal.

As the aide-de-camp to whom I had been speaking opened the door for him to pass out, I could hear some words in a low voice, in which the phrases, "letters of importance" and "your Royal Highness" occurred. The individual addressed turned suddenly about, and casting a rapid glance around the room, without deigning a word in reply, walked straight up to where I was standing.

"Despatches for me, sir?" said he, shortly, taking, as he spoke, the packet from my hand.

"For his Royal Highness the commander-in-chief," said I, bowing respectfully, and still uncertain in whose presence I was standing. He broke the seal without answering, and as his eye caught the first lines of the despatch, broke out into an exclamation of —

"Ha, Peninsular news! When did you arrive, sir?"

"An hour since, sir."

"And these letters are from — "

"General Picton, your Royal Highness."

"How glorious! How splendidly done!" muttered he to himself, as he ran his eyes rapidly over the letter. "Are you Captain O'Malley, whose name is mentioned here so favorably?"

I bowed deeply in reply.

"You are most highly spoken of, and it will give me sincere pleasure to recommend you to the notice of the Prince Regent. But stay a moment," so saying, he hurriedly passed from the room, leaving me overwhelmed at the suddenness of the incident, and a mark of no small astonishment to the different persons in waiting, who had hitherto no other idea but that my despatches were from Hounslow or Knightsbridge.

"Captain O'Malley," said an officer covered with decorations, and whose slightly foreign accent bespoke the Hanoverian, "his Royal Highness requests you will accompany me." The door opened as he spoke, and I found myself in a most splendidly lit-up apartment, — the walls covered with pictures, and the ceiling divided into panels resplendent with the richest gilding. A group of persons in court dresses were conversing in a low tone as we entered, but suddenly ceased, and saluting my conductor respectfully, made way for us to pass on. The folding-doors again opened as we approached, and we found ourselves in a long gallery, whose sumptuous furniture and costly decorations shone beneath the rich tints of a massive lustre of ruby glass, diffusing a glow resembling the most gorgeous sunset. Here also some persons in handsome uniform were conversing, one of whom accosted my companion by the title of "Baron;" nodding familiarly as he muttered a few words in German, he passed forward, and the next moment the doors were thrown suddenly wide, and we entered the drawing-room.

The buzz of voices and the sound of laughter reassured me as I came forward, and before I had well time to think where and why I was there, the Duke of York advanced towards me, with a smile of peculiar sweetness in its expression, and said, as he turned towards one side: —

"Your Royal Highness — Captain O'Malley!"

As he spoke the Prince moved forward, and bowed slightly.

"You've brought us capital news, Mr. O'Malley. May I beg, if you 're not too much tired, you 'll join us at dinner. I am most anxious to learn the particulars of the assault."

As I bowed my acknowledgments to the gracious invitation, he continued: —

"Are you acquainted with my friend here? — but of course you can scarcely be; you began too early as a soldier. So let me present you to my friend, Mr. Tierney," a middle-aged man, whose broad, white forehead and deep-set eyes gave a character to features that were otherwise not remarkable in expression, and who bowed rather stiffly.

Before he had concluded a somewhat labored compliment to me, we were joined by a third person, whose strikingly-handsome features were lit up with an expression of the most animated kind. He accosted the Prince with an air of easy familiarity, and while he led him from the group, appeared to be relating some anecdote which actually convulsed his Royal Highness with laughter.

Before I had time or opportunity to inquire who the individual could be, dinner was announced, and the wide folding-doors being thrown open, displayed the magnificent dining-room of Carlton House in all the blaze and splendor of its magnificence.

The sudden change from the rough vicissitudes of campaigning life to all the luxury and voluptuous elegance of a brilliant court, created too much confusion in my mind to permit of my impressions being the most accurate or most collected. The splendor of the scene, the rank, but even more the talent of the individuals by whom I was surrounded, had all their full effect upon me. And although I found, from the tone of the conversation about, how immeasurably I was their inferior, yet by a delicate and courteous interest in the scene of which I had lately partaken, they took away the awkwardness which in some degree was inseparable from the novelty of my position among them.

Conversing about the Peninsula with a degree of knowledge which I could in no wise comprehend from those not engaged in the war, they appeared perfectly acquainted with all the details of the campaign; and I heard on every side of me anecdotes and stories which I scarcely believed known beyond the precincts of a regiment. The Prince himself — the grace and charm of whose narrative talents have seldom been excelled — was particularly conspicuous, and I could not help feeling struck with his admirable imitations of voice and manner. The most accomplished actor could not have personated the canny, calculating spirit of the Scot, or the rollicking recklessness of the Irishman, with more tact and *finesse.* But far above all this, shone the person I have already alluded to as speaking to his Royal Highness in the drawing-room. Combining the happiest conversational eloquence with a quick, ready, and brilliant fancy, he threw from him in all the careless profusion of boundless resource a shower of pointed and epigrammatic witticisms. Now illustrating a really difficult subject by one happy touch, as the blaze of the lightning will light up the whole surface of the dark landscape beneath it; now turning the force of an adversary's argument by some fallacious but unanswerable jest, accompanying the whole by those fascinations of voice, look, gesture, and manner which have made those who once have seen, never able to forget Brinsley Sheridan.

I am not able, were I even disposed, to record more particularly the details of that most brilliant evening of my life. On every side of me I heard the names of those whose fame as statesmen or whose repute as men of letters was ringing throughout Europe. They were then, too, not in the easy indolence of ordinary life, but displaying with their utmost effort those powers of wit, fancy, imagination, and eloquence which had won for them elsewhere their high and exalted position. The masculine understanding and powerful intellect of Tierney vied with the brilliant and dazzling conceptions of Sheridan. The easy *bonhomie* and English heartiness of Fox contrasted with the cutting sarcasm and sharp raillery of O'Kelly. While contesting the palm with each himself, the Prince evinced powers of mind and eloquent facilities of expression that, in any walk of life, must have made their possessor a most distinguished man. Politics, war, women, literature, the turf, the navy, the opposition, architecture, and the drama, were all discussed with a degree of information and knowledge that proved to me how much of real acquirements can be obtained by those whose exalted station surrounds them with the collective intellect of a nation. As for myself, the time flew past unconsciously. So brilliant a display of all that was courtly and fascinating in manner, and all that was brightest in genius, was so novel to me, that I really felt like one entranced. To this hour, my impression, however confused in details, is as vivid as though that evening were but yesternight; and although since that period I have enjoyed numerous opportunities of meeting with the great and the gifted, yet I treasure the memory of that evening as by far the most exciting of my whole life.

While I abstain from any mention of the many incidents of the evening, I cannot pass over one which, occurring to myself, is valuable but as showing, by one slight and passing trait, the amiable and kind feeling of one whose memory is hallowed in the service.

A little lower than myself, on the opposite side of the table, I perceived an old military acquaintance whom I had first met in Lisbon. He was then on Sir Charles Stewart's staff, and we met almost daily. Wishing to commend myself to his recollection, I endeavored for some time to catch his eye, but in vain; but at last when I thought I had succeeded, I called to him, —

"I say, Fred, a glass of wine with you."

When suddenly the Duke of York, who was speaking to Lord Hertford, turned quickly round, and taking the decanter in his hand, replied, —

"With pleasure, O'Malley. What shall it be, my boy?"

I shall never forget the manly good-humor of his look as he sat waiting for my answer. He had taken my speech as addressed to himself, and concluding that from fatigue, the novelty of the scene, my youth, etc., I was not over collected, vouchsafed in this kind way to receive it.

"So," said he, as I stammered out my explanation, "I was deceived. However, don't cheat me out of my glass of wine. Let us have it now."

With this little anecdote, whose truth I vouch for, I shall conclude. More than one now living was a witness to it, and my only regret in the mention of it is my inability to convey the readiness with which he seized the moment of apparent difficulty to throw the protection of his kind and warm-hearted nature over the apparent folly of a boy.

It was late when the party broke up, and as I took my leave of the Prince, he once more expressed himself in gracious terms towards me, and gave me personally an invitation to a breakfast at Hounslow on the following Saturday.

CHAPTER XL.

THE BELL AT BRISTOL.

On the morning after my dinner at Carlton House, I found my breakfast-table covered with cards and invitations. The news of the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo was published in all the morning papers, and my own humble name, in letters of three feet long, was exhibited in placards throughout the city. Less to this circumstance, however, than to the kind and gracious notice of the Prince, was I indebted for the attentions which were shown me by every one; and indeed, so flattering was the reception I met with, and so overwhelming the civility showered on me from all sides, that it required no small effort on my part not to believe myself as much a hero as they would make me. An eternal round of dinners, balls, breakfasts, and entertainments filled up the entire week. I was included in every invitation to Carlton House, and never appeared without receiving from his Royal Highness the most striking marks of attention. Captivating as all this undoubtedly was, and fascinated as I felt in being the lion of London, the courted and sought after by the high, the titled, and the talented of the great city of the universe, yet amidst all the splendor and seduction of that new world, my heart instinctively turned from the glare and brilliancy of gorgeous saloons, from the soft looks and softer voice of beauty, from the words of praise as they fell from the lips of those whose notice was fame itself, — to my humble home amidst the mountains of the west. Delighted and charmed as I felt by that tribute of flattery which associated my name with one of the most brilliant actions of my country, yet hitherto I had experienced no touch of home or fatherland. England was to me as the high and powerful head of my house, whose greatness and whose glory shed a halo far and near, from the proudest to the humblest of those that call themselves Britons; but Ireland was the land of my birth, — the land of my earliest ties, my dearest associations, — the kind mother whose breath had fanned my brow in infancy, and for her in my manhood my heart beat with every throb of filial affection. Need I say, then, how ardently I longed to turn homeward; for independent of all else, I could not avoid some self-reproach on thinking what might be the condition of those I prized the most on earth, at that very moment I was engaging in all the voluptuous abandonment, and all the fascinating excesses of a life of pleasure. I wrote several letters home, but received no answer; nor did I, in the whole round of London society, meet with a single person who could give me information of my family or my friends. The Easter recess had sent the different members of Parliament to their homes; and thus, within a comparatively short distance of all I cared for, I could learn nothing of their fate.

The invitations of the Prince Regent, which were, of course, to be regarded as commands, still detained me in London; and I knew not in what manner to escape from the fresh engagements which each day heaped upon me. In my anxiety upon the subject, I communicated my wishes to a friend on the duke's staff, and the following morning, as I presented myself at his levee, he called me towards him and addressed me: —

"What leave have you got, Captain O'Malley?"

"Three months, your Royal Highness."

"Do you desire an unattached troop; for if so, an opportunity occurs just at this moment."

"I thank you most sincerely, sir, for your condescension in thinking of me; but my wish is to join my regiment at the expiration of my leave."

"Why, I thought they told me you wanted to spend some time in Ireland?"

"Only sufficient to see my friends, your Royal Highness. That done, I'd rather join my regiment immediately."

"Ah, that alters the case! So then, probably, you'd like to leave us at once. I see how it is; you've been staying here against your will all this while. Then, don't say a word. I'll make your excuses at Carlton House; and the better to cover your retreat, I 'll employ you on service. Here, Gordon, let Captain O'Malley have the despatches for Sir Henry Howard, at Cork." As he said this, he turned towards me with an air of affected sternness in his manner, and continued: "I expect, Captain O'Malley, that you will deliver the despatches intrusted to your care without a moment's loss of time. You will leave London within an hour. The instructions for your journey will be sent to your hotel. And now," said he, again changing his voice to its natural tone of kindliness and courtesy, — "and now, my boy, good-by, and a safe journey to you. These letters will pay your expenses, and the occasion save you all the worry of leave-taking."

I stood confused and speechless, unable to utter a single word of gratitude for such unexpected kindness. The duke saw at once my difficulty, and as he shook me warmly by the hand, added, in a laughing tone, —

"Don't wait, now; you must n't forget that your despatches are pressing."

I bowed deeply, attempted a few words of acknowledgment, hesitated, blundered, broke down, and at last got out of the room, Heaven knows how, and found myself running towards Long's at the top of my speed. Within that same hour I was rattling along towards Bristol as fast as four posters could burn the pavement, thinking with ecstasy over the pleasures of my reception in England; but far more than all, of the kindness evinced towards me by him who, in every feeling of his nature, and in every feature of his deportment was "every inch a prince."

However astonished I had been at the warmth by which I was treated in London, I was still less prepared for the enthusiasm which greeted me in every town through which I passed. There was not a village where we stopped to change horses whose inhabitants did not simultaneously pour forth to welcome me with every demonstration of delight. That the fact of four horses and a yellow chaise should have elicited such testimonies of satisfaction, was somewhat difficult to conceive; and even had the important news that I was the bearer of despatches been telegraphed from London by successive postboys, still the extraordinary excitement was unaccountable. It was only on reaching Bristol that I learned to what circumstance my popularity was owing. My friend Mike, in humble imitation of election practices, had posted a large placard on the back of the chaise, announcing, in letters of portentous length, something like the following: —

"Bloody news! Fall of Ciudad Rodrigo! Five thousand prisoners and two hundred pieces of cannon taken!"

This veracious and satisfactory statement, aided by Mike's personal exertions, and an unwearied performance on the trumpet he had taken from the French dragoon, had roused the population of every hamlet, and made our journey from London to Bristol one scene of uproar, noise, and confusion. All my attempts to suppress Mike's oratory or music were perfectly unavailing. In fact, he had pledged my health so many times during the day; he had drunk so many toasts to the success of the British arms, so many to the English nation, so many in honor of Ireland, and so many in honor of Mickey Free himself, — that all respect for my authority was lost in his enthusiasm for my greatness, and his shouts became wilder, and the blasts from the trumpet more fearful and incoherent; and finally, on the last stage of our journey, having exhausted as it were every tribute of his lungs, he seemed (if I were to judge by the evidence of my ears) to be performing something very like a hornpipe on the roof of the chaise.

Happily for me there is a limit to all human efforts, and even *his* powers at length succumbed; so that, when we arrived at Bristol, I persuaded him to go to bed, and I once more was left to the enjoyment of some quiet. To fill up the few hours which intervened before bedtime, I strolled into the coffee-room. The English look of every one, and everything around, had still its charm for me; and I contemplated, with no small admiration, that air of neatness and propriety so observant from the bright-faced clock that ticked unwearily upon the mantelpiece, to the trim waiter himself, with noiseless step and a mixed look of vigilance and vacancy. The perfect stillness struck me, save when a deep voice called for "another brandy-and-water," and some more modestly-toned request would utter a desire for "more cream." The attention of each man, absorbed in the folds of his voluminous newspaper, scarcely deigning a glance at the new-comer who entered, was in keeping with the general surroundings, — giving, in their solemnity and gravity, a character of almost religious seriousness, to what, in any other land, would be a scene of riotous and discordant tumult. I was watching all this with a more than common interest, when the door opened, and the waiter entered with a large placard. He was followed by another with a ladder, by whose assistance he succeeded in attaching the large square of paper to the wall above the fireplace. Every one about rose up, curious to ascertain what was going forward; and I myself joined in the crowd around the fire. The first glance of the announcement showed me what it meant; and it was with a strange mixture of shame and confusion I read: —

"Fall of Ciudad Rodrigo: with a full and detailed account of the storming of the great breach, capture of the enemy's cannon, etc., by Michael Free, 14th Light Dragoons."

Leaving the many around me busied in conjecturing who the aforesaid Mr. Free might be, and what peculiar opportunities he might have enjoyed for his report, I hurried from the room and called the waiter.

"What's the meaning of the announcement you've just put up in the coffee-room? Where did it come from?"

"Most important news, sir; exclusively in the columns of the 'Bristol Telegraph,' — the gentleman has just arrived —"

"Who, pray? What gentleman?"

"Mr. Free, sir, No. 13 — large bed-room — blue damask — supper for two — oysters — a devil — brandy-and-water — mulled port."

"What the devil do you mean? Is the fellow at supper?"

Somewhat shocked by the tone I ventured to assume towards the illustrious narrator, the waiter merely bowed his reply.

"Show me to his room," said I; "I should like to see him."

"Follow me, if you please, sir, — this way. What name shall I say, sir?"

"You need not mind announcing me, — I'm an old acquaintance, — just show me the room."

"I beg pardon, sir, but Mr. Meekins, the editor of the 'Telegraph,' is engaged with him at present; and positive orders are given not to suffer any interruption."

"No matter; do as I bid you. Is that it? Oh, I hear his voice. There, that will do. You may go down-stairs, I'll introduce myself."

So saying, and slipping a crown into the waiter's hand, I proceeded cautiously towards the door, and opened it stealthily. My caution was, however, needless; for a large screen was drawn across this part of the room, completely concealing the door, closing which behind me, I took my place beneath the shelter of this ambuscade, determined on no account to be perceived by the parties.

Seated in a large arm-chair, a smoking tumbler of mulled port before him, sat my friend Mike, dressed in my full regimentals, even to the helmet, which, unfortunately however for the effect, he had put on back foremost; a short "dudeen" graced his lip, and the trumpet so frequently alluded to lay near him.

Opposite him sat a short, puny, round-faced little gentleman with rolling eyes and a turned-up nose. Numerous sheets of paper, pens, etc., lay scattered about; and he evinced, by his air and gesture, the most marked and eager attention to Mr. Free's narrative, whose frequent interruptions, caused by the drink and the oysters, were viewed with no small impatience by the anxious editor.

"You must remember, Captain, time 's passing; the placards are all out. Must be at press before one o'clock tonight, — the morning edition is everything with us. You were at the first parallel, I think."

"Devil a one o' me knows. Just ring that bell near you. Them 's elegant oysters; and you 're not taking your drop of liquor. Here 's a toast for you: 'May —' Whoop! raal Carlingford's, upon my conscience! See now, if I won't hit the little black chap up there the first shot."

Scarcely were the words spoken, when a little painted bust of Shakespeare fell in fragments on the floor, as an oyster-shell laid him low.

A faint effort at a laugh at the eccentricities of his friend was all the poor editor could accomplish, while Mike's triumph knew no bounds.

"Did n't I tell you? But come now, are you ready? Give the pen a drink, if you won't take one yourself."

"I am ready, quite ready," responded the editor.

"Faith, and it 's more nor I am. See now, here it is: The night was murthering dark; you could not see a stim."

"Not see a — a what?"

"A stim, bad luck to you; don't you know English? Hand me the hot water. Have you that down yet?"

"Yes. Pray proceed."

"The Fifth Division was orthered up, bekase they were fighting chaps; the Eighty-eighth was among them; the Rangers — Oh, upon my soul, we must drink the Rangers!

Here, devil a one o' me will go on till we give them all the honors — Hip! — begin."

"Hip!" sighed the luckless editor, as he rose from his chair, obedient to the command.

"Hurra! hurra! hurra! Well done! There 's stuff in you yet, ould foolscap! The little bottle 's empty; ring again, if ye plaze.

'Oh, Father Magan
Was a beautiful man,
But a bit of a rogue, a bit of a rogue!
He was just six feet high,
Had a cast in his eye,
And an illigint brogue, an illigint brogue!

'He was born in Killarney,
And reared up in blarney —'

"Arrah, don't be looking miserable and dissolute that way. Sure, I 'm only screwing myself up for you; besides, you can print the song av you like. It 's a sweet tune, 'Teddy, you Gander.'"

"Really, Mr. Free, I see no prospect of our ever getting done."

"The saints in Heaven forbid!" interrupted Mike, piously; "the evening 's young, and drink plenty. Here now, make ready!"

The editor once more made a gesture of preparation.

"Well, as I was saying," resumed Mike, "it was pitch dark when the columns moved up, and a cold, raw night, with a little thin rain falling. Have you that down?"

"Yes. Pray go on."

"Well, just as it might be here, at the corner of the trench, I met Dr. Quill. 'They 're waiting for you, Mr. Free,' says he, 'down there. Picton 's asking for you.' 'Faith, and he must wait,' says I, 'for I 'm terrible dry.' With that, he pulled out his canteen and mixed me a little brandy-and-water. 'Are you taking it without a toast?' says Doctor Maurice. 'Never fear,' says I; 'here 's Mary Brady —'"

"But, my dear sir," interposed Mr. Meekins, "pray *do* remember this is somewhat irrelevant. In fifteen minutes it will be twelve o'clock."

"I know it, ould boy, I know it. I see what you 're at. You were going to observe how much better we 'd be for a broiled bone."

"Nothing of the kind, I assure you. For Heaven's sake, no more eating and drinking!"

"No more eating nor drinking! Why not? You 've a nice notion of a convivial evening. Faith, we 'll have the broiled bone sure enough, and, what 's more, a half gallon of the strongest punch they can make us; an' I hope that, grave as you are, you 'll favor the company with a song."

"Really, Mr. Free —"

"Arrah, none of your blarney! Don't be misthering me! Call me Mickey, or Mickey Free, if you like better."

"I protest," said the editor, with dismay, "that here we are two hours at work, and we have n't got to the foot of the great breach."

"And was n't the army three months and a half in just getting that far, with a battering train and mortars and the finest troops ever were seen? And there you sit, a little fat creature, with your pen in your hand, grumbling that you can't do more than the whole British army. Take care you don't provoke me to beat you; for I am quiet till I 'm roused. But, by the Rock o' Cashel —"

Here he grasped the brass trumpet with an energy that made the editor spring from his chair.

"For mercy's sake, Mr. Free —"

"Well, I won't; but sit down there, and don't be bothering me about sieges and battles and things you know nothing about."

"I protest," rejoined Mr. Meekins, "that, had you not sent to my office intimating your wish to communicate an account of the siege, I never should have thought of intruding myself upon you. And now, since you appear indisposed to afford the information in question, if you will permit me, I 'll wish you a very good-night."

"Faith, and so you shall, and help me to pass one too; for not a step out o' that chair shall you take till morning.

Do ye think I am going to be left here by myself all alone ?"

"I must observe —" said Mr. Meekins.

"To be sure, to be sure," said Mickey ; "I see what you mean. You 're not the best of company, it 's true ; but at a pinch like this — There now, take your liquor."

"Once for all, sir," said the editor, "I would beg you to recollect that, on the faith of your message to me, I have announced an account of the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo for our morning edition. Are you prepared, may I ask, for the consequences of my disappointing ten thousand readers ?"

"It 's little I care for one of them. I never knew much of reading myself."

"If you think to make a jest of me —" interposed Mr. Meekins, reddening with passion.

"A jest of you ! Troth, it 's little fun I can get out of you ; you 're as tiresome a creature as ever I spent an evening with. See now, I told you before not to provoke me ; we 'll have a little more drink ; ring the bell. Who knows but you 'll turn out better by-and-by ?"

As Mike rose at these words to summon the waiter, Mr. Meekins seized the opportunity to make his escape. Scarcely had he reached the door, however, when he was perceived by Mickey, who hurled the trumpet at him with all his force, while he uttered a shout that nearly left the poor editor lifeless with terror. This time, happily, Mr. Free's aim failed him, and before he could arrest the progress of his victim, he had gained the corridor, and with one bound, cleared the first flight of the staircase, his pace increasing every moment as Mike's denunciations grew louder and louder, till at last, as he reached the street, Mr. Free's delight overcame his indignation, and he threw himself upon a chair and laughed immoderately.

"Oh, may I never ! if I did n't frighten the editor. The little spalpeen could n't eat his oysters and take his punch like a man. But sure if he did n't, there 's more left for his betters." So saying, he filled himself a goblet and drank it off. "Mr. Free, we won't say much for your inclinations, for may be they are not the best ; but here 's bad luck to the fellow that does n't think you good company; and here," added he, again filling his glass, — "and here 's may the devil take editors and authors and compositors, that won't let us alone, but must be taking our lives and our songs and our little devilments, that belongs to one's own family, and tell them all over the world. A lazy set of thieves you are, every one of you; spending your time inventing lies, devil a more nor less; and here," this time he filled again, — "and here 's a hot corner and Kilkenny coals, that 's half sulphur, to the villain — "

For what particular class of offenders Mike's penal code was now devised, I was not destined to learn; for overcome by punch and indignation, he gave one loud whoop, and measured his length upon the floor. Having committed him to the care of the waiters, from whom I learned more fully the particulars of his acquaintance with Mr. Meekins, I enjoined them, strictly, not to mention that I knew anything of the matter; and betook myself to my bed sincerely rejoicing that in a few hours more Mike would be again in that land where even his eccentricities and excesses would be viewed with a favorable and forgiving eye.

CHAPTER XLI.

IRELAND.

"You 'd better call your master up," said the skipper to Mickey Free, on the second evening after our departure from Bristol; "he said he 'd like to have a look at the coast."

The words were overheard by me, as I lay between sleeping and waking in the cabin of the packet, and without waiting for a second invitation, I rushed upon deck. The sun was setting, and one vast surface of yellow golden light played upon the water, as it rippled beneath a gentle gale. The white foam curled at our prow, and the rushing sound told the speed we were going at. The little craft was staggering under every sheet of her canvas, and her spars creaked as her white sails bent before the breeze. Before us, but to my landsman's eyes scarcely perceptible, were the ill-defined outlines of cloudy darkness they called land, and which I continued to gaze at with a strange sense of interest, while I heard the names of certain well-known headlands assigned to apparently mere masses of fog-bank and vapor.

He who has never been separated in early years, while yet the budding affections of his heart are tender shoots, from the land of his birth and of his home, knows nothing of the throng of sensations that crowd upon him as he nears the shore of his country. The names, familiar as household words, come with a train of long-buried thoughts; the feeling of attachment to all we call our own — that patriotism of the heart — stirs strongly within him, as the mingled thrills of hope and fear alternately move him to joy or sadness.

Hard as are the worldly struggles between the daily cares of him who carves out his own career and fortune, yet he has never experienced the darkest poverty of fate who has not felt what it is to be a wanderer, without a country to lay claim to. Of all the desolations that visit us, this is the gloomiest and the worst. The outcast from the land of his fathers, whose voice must never be heard within the walls where his infancy was nurtured, nor his step be free upon the mountains where he gambolled in his youth, this is indeed wretchedness. The instinct of country grows and strengthens with our years; the joys of early life are linked with it; the hopes of age point towards it; and he who knows not the thrill of ecstasy some well-remembered, long-lost-sight-of place can bring to his heart when returning after years of absence, is ignorant of one of the purest sources of happiness of our nature.

With what a yearning of the heart, then, did I look upon the dim and misty cliffs, that mighty framework of my island home, their stern sides lashed by the blue waters of the ocean, and their summits lost within the clouds! With what an easy and natural transition did my mind turn from the wild mountains and the green valleys to their hardy sons, who toiled beneath the burning sun of the Peninsula; and how, as some twinkling light of the distant shore would catch my eye, did I wonder within myself whether beside that hearth and board there might not sit some whose thoughts were wandering over the sea beside the bold steeps of El Bodon, or the death-strewn plain of Talavera, — their memories calling up some trait of him who was the idol of his home; whose closing lids some fond mother had watched over; above whose peaceful slumber her prayers had fallen; but whose narrow bed was now beneath the breach of Badajos, and his sleep the sleep that knows not waking!

I know not if in my sad and sorrowing spirit I did not envy him who thus had met a soldier's fate, — for what of promise had my own! My hopes of being in any way instrumental to my poor uncle's happiness grew hourly less. His prejudices were deeply rooted and of long standing; to have asked him to surrender any of what he looked upon as the prerogatives of his house and name, would be to risk the loss of his esteem. What then remained for me? Was I to watch, day by day and hour by hour, the falling ruin of our fortunes? Was I to involve myself in the petty warfare of unavailing resistance to the law? And could I stand aloof from my best, my truest, my earliest friend, and see him, alone and unaided, oppose his weak and final struggle to the unrelenting career of persecution. Between these two alternatives the former could be my only choice; and what a choice!

Oh, how I thought over the wild heroism of the battle-field, the reckless fury of the charge, the crash, the death-cry, and the sad picture of the morrow, when all was past, and a soldier's glory alone remained to shed its high halo over the faults and the follies of the dead.

As night fell, the twinkling of the distant lighthouses — some throwing a column of light from the very verge of the horizon, others shining brightly, like stars, from some lofty promontory — marked the different outlines of the coast, and conveyed to me the memory of that broken and wild mountain tract that forms the bulwark of the Green Isle against the waves of the Atlantic. Alone and silently I trod the deck, now turning to look towards the shore, where I thought I could detect the position of some well-known headland, now straining my eyes seaward to watch some bright and flitting star, as it rose from or merged beneath the foaming water, denoting the track of the swift pilot-boat, or the hardy lugger of the fisherman; while the shrill whistle of the floating sea-gull was the only sound save the rushing waves that broke in spray upon our quarter.

What is it that so inevitably inspires sad and depressing thoughts as we walk the deck of some little craft in the silence of the night's dark hours? No sense of danger near, we hold on our course swiftly and steadily, cleaving the dark waves and bending gracefully beneath the freshening breeze. Yet still the motion, which, in the bright sunshine of the noonday tells of joy and gladness, brings now no touch of pleasure to our hearts. The dark and frowning sky, the boundless expanse of gloomy water, spread like some gigantic pall around us, and our thoughts either turn back upon the saddest features of the past or look forward to the future with a sickly hope that all may not be as we fear it.

Mine were, indeed, of the gloomiest; and the selfishness alone of the thought prevented me from wishing that, like many another, I had fallen by a soldier's death on the plains of the Peninsula!

As the night wore on, I wrapped myself in my cloak and lay down beneath the bulwark. The whole of my past life came in review before me, and I thought over my first meeting with Lucy Dashwood; the thrill of boyish admiration gliding into love; the hopes, the fears, that stirred my heart; the firm resolve to merit her affection, which made me a soldier. Alas, how little thought she of him to whose whole life she had been a guide-star and a beacon! And as I thought over the hard-fought fields, the long, fatiguing marches, the nights around the watch-fires, and felt how, in the whirl and enthusiasm of a soldier's life, the cares and sorrows of every-day existence are forgotten, I shuddered to reflect upon the career that might now open before me. To abandon, perhaps forever, the glorious path I had been pursuing for a life of indolence and weariness, while my name, that had already, by the chance of some fortunate circumstances, begun to be mentioned with a testimony of approval, should be lost in oblivion or remembered but as that of one whose early promise was not borne out by the deeds of his manhood.

As day broke, overcome by watching, I slept, but was soon awoke by the stir and bustle around me. The breeze had freshened, and we were running under a reefed mainsail and foresail; and as the little craft bounded above the blue water, the white foam crested above her prow, and ran in boiling rivulets along towards the after-deck. The tramp of the seamen, the hoarse voice of the captain, the shrill cry of the sea-birds, betokened, however, nothing of dread or danger; and listlessly I leaned upon my elbow and asked what was going forward.

"Nothing, sir; only making ready to drop our anchor."

"Are we so near shore, then?" said I.

"You've only to round that point to windward, and have a clear run into Cork harbor."

I sprang at once to my legs. The land-fog prevented my seeing anything whatever, but I thought that in the breeze, fresh and balmy as it blew, I could feel the wind off shore.

"At last," said I, — "at last!" as I stepped into the little wherry which shot alongside of us, and we glided into the still basin of Cove. How I remember every white-walled cottage, and the beetling cliffs, and that bold headland beside which the valley opens, with its dark-green woods, and then Spike Island. And what a stir is yonder, early as it is; the men-of-war tenders seem alive with people, while still the little village is sunk in slumber, not a smoke-wreath rising from its silent hearths. Every plash of the oars in the calm water as I neared the land, every chance word of the bronzed and hardy fisherman, told upon my heart. I felt it was my home.

"Is n't it beautiful, sir? Is n't it illigant?" said a voice behind me, which there could be little doubt in my detecting, although I had not seen the individual since I left England.

"Is not what beautiful?" replied I, rather harshly, at the interruption of my own thoughts.

"Ireland, to be sure; and long life to her!" cried he, with a cheer that soon found its responsive echoes in the hearts of our sailors, who seconded the sentiment with all their energy.

"How am I to get up to Cork, lads?" said I. "I am pressed for time, and must get forward."

"We 'll row your honor the whole way, av it 's plazing to you."

"Why, thank you, I 'd rather find some quicker mode of proceeding."

"May be you 'd have a chaise? There 's an elegant one at M'Cassidy's."

"Sure, the blind mare 's in foal," said the bow oar. "The devil a step she can go out of a walk; so, your honor, take Tim Riley's car, and you 'll get up cheap. Not that you care for money; but he 's going up at eight o'clock with two young ladies."

"Oh, be-gorra!" said the other, "and so he is. And faix, ye might do worse; they 're nice craytures."

"Well," said I, "your advice seems good; but perhaps they might object to my company."

"I 've no fear; they 're always with the officers. Sure, the Miss Dalrymples —"

"The Miss Dalrymples! Push ahead, boys; it must be later than I thought. We must get the chaise; I can't wait."

Ten minutes more brought us to land.

My arrangements were soon made, and as my impatience to press forward became greater the nearer I drew to my destination, I lost not a moment.

The yellow chaise — sole glory of Cove — was brought forth at my request; and by good fortune, four posters which had been down the preceding evening from Cork to some gentleman's seat near were about to return. These were also pressed into my service; and just as the first early riser of the little village was drawing his curtain to take a half-closed eye-glance upon the breaking morning, I rattled forth upon my journey at a pace which, could I only have secured its continuance, must soon have terminated my weary way.

Beautiful as the whole line of country is, I was totally unconscious of it; and even Mike's conversational powers, divided as they were between myself and the two postilions, were fruitless in arousing me from the deep preoccupation of my mind by thoughts of home.

It was, then, with some astonishment I heard the boy upon the wheeler ask whither he should drive me to.

"Tell his honor to wake up; we 're in Cork now."

"In Cork! Impossible, already!"

"Faith, may be so; but it 's Cork, sure enough."

"Drive to the 'George.' It 's not far from the commander-in-chief's quarters."

"'T is five minutes' walk, sir. You 'll be there before they 're put to again."

"Horses for Fermoy!" shouted out the postilions, as we tore up to the door in a gallop. I sprang out, and by the assistance of the waiter, discovered Sir Henry Howard's quarters, to whom my despatches were addressed. Having delivered them into the hands of an aide-de-camp, who sat bolt upright in his bed, rubbing his eyes to appear awake, I again hurried down-stairs, and throwing myself into the chaise, continued my journey.

"Them's beautiful streets, any how!" said Mike, "av they wasn't kept so dirty, and the houses so dark, and the pavement bad. That's Mr. Beamish's, that fine house there with the brass rapper and the green lamp beside it; and there's the hospital. Faix, and there's the place we beat the police when I was here before; and the house with the sign of the Highlander is thrown down; and what's the big building with the stone posts at the door?"

"The bank, sir," said the postilion, with a most deferential air as Mike addressed him.

"What bank, acushla?"

"Not a one of me knows, sir; but they call it the bank, though it's only an empty house."

"Cary and Moore's bank, perhaps?" said I, having heard that in days long past some such names had failed in Cork for a large amount.

"So it is; your honor's right," cried the postilion; while Mike, standing up on the box, and menacing the house with his clinched fist, shouted out at the very top of his voice:

"Oh, bad luck to your cobwebbed windows and iron railings! Sure, it's my father's son ought to hate the sight of you."

"I hope, Mike, your father never trusted his property in such hands?"

"I don't suspect he did, your honor. He never put much belief in the banks; but the house cost him dear enough without that."

As I could not help feeling some curiosity in this matter, I pressed Mickey for an explanation.

"But may be it's not Cary and Moore's, after all; and I may be cursing dacent people."

Having reassured his mind by telling him that the reservation he made by the doubt would tell in their favor should he prove mistaken, he afforded me the following information: —

"When my father — the heavens be his bed! — was in the 'Cork,' they put him one night on guard at that same big house you just passed, av it was the same; but if it wasn't that, it was another. And it was a beautiful fine night in August and the moon up, and plenty of people walking about, and all kinds of fun and devilment going on, —drinking and dancing and everything.

"Well, my father was stuck up there with his musket, to walk up and down, and not say, 'God save you kindly,' or the time of day or anything, but just march as if he was in the barrack-yard; and by reason of his being the man he was he did n't like it half, but kept cursing and swearing to himself like mad when he saw pleasant fellows and pretty girls going by, laughing and joking.

"'Good-evening, Mickey,' says one. 'Fine sport ye have all to yourself, with your long feather in your cap.'

"'Arrah, look how proud he is,' says another, 'with his head up as if he did n't see a body.'

"'Shoulder, hoo!' cried a drunken chap, with a shovel in his hand. Then they all began laughing away at my father.

"'Let the dacent man alone,' said an ould fellow in a wig. 'Is n't he guarding the bank, wid all the money in it?'

"'Faix, he is n't,' says another; 'for there 's none left.'

"'What 's that you 're saying?' says my father.

"'Just that the bank 's broke; devil a more!' says he.

"'And there 's no goold in it?' says my father.

"'Divil a guinea.'

"'Nor silver?'

"'No, nor silver; nor as much as sixpence, either.'

"'Did n't ye hear that all day yesterday when the people was coming in with their notes, the chaps there were heating the guineas in a frying-pan, pretending that they were making them as fast as they could; and sure, when they had a batch red-hot they spread them out to cool; and what betune the hating and the cooling, and the burning the fingers counting them, they kept the bank open to three o'clock, and then they ran away.'

"'Is it truth yer telling?' says my father.

"'Sorra word o' lie in it! Myself had two-and-fourpence of their notes.'

"'And so they 're broke,' says my father, 'and nothing left?'

"'Not a brass farden.'

"'And what am I staying here for, I wonder, if there's nothing to guard?'

"'Faix, if it is n't for the pride of the thing —'

"'Oh, sorra taste!'

"'Well, may be for divarsion.'

"'Nor that either.'

"'Faix, then you're a droll man, to spend the evening that way,' says he; and all the crowd — for there was a crowd — said the same. So with that my father unscrewed his bayonet, and put his piece on his shoulder, and walked off to his bed in the barrack as peaceable as need be. But well, when they came to relieve him, was n't there a raal commotion? And faith, you see, it went mighty hard with my father the next morning; for the bank was open just as usual, and my father was sintinced to fifty lashes, but got off with a week in prison, and three more rowling a big stone in the barrack-yard."

Thus chatting away, the time passed over, until we arrived at Fermoy. Here there was some little delay in procuring horses; and during the negotiation, Mike, who usually made himself master of the circumstances of every place through which he passed, discovered that the grocer's shop of the village was kept by a namesake, and possibly a relation of his own.

"I always had a notion, Mister Charles, that I came from a good stock; and sure enough, here's 'Mary Free' over the door there, and a beautiful place inside; full of tay and sugar and gingerbread and glue and coffee and bran, pickled herrings, soap, and many other commodities."

"Perhaps you'd like to claim kindred, Mike," said I, interrupting; "I'm sure she'd feel flattered to discover a relative in a Peninsular hero."

"It's just what I'm thinking; av we were going to pass the evening here, I'd try if I could n't make her out a second cousin at least."

Fortune, upon this occasion, seconded Mike's wishes, for when the horses made their appearance, I learned, to my surprise, that the near side one would not bear a saddle, and the off-sider could only run on his own side. In this conjuncture, the postilion was obliged to drive from what, *Hibernicè* speaking, is called the perch, — no ill-applied denomination to a piece of wood which, about the thickness of one's arm, is hung between the two fore-springs, and serves as a resting-place in which the luckless wight, weary of the saddle, is not sorry to repose himself.

"What's to be done?" cried I. "There's no room within; my traps barely leave space for myself among them."

"Sure, sir," said the postilion, "the other gentleman can follow in the morning coach; and if any accident happens to yourself on the road, by reason of a break-down, he'll be there as soon as yourself."

This, at least, was an agreeable suggestion, and as I saw it chimed with Mike's notions, I acceded at once; he came running up at the moment.

"I had a peep at her through the window, Mister Charles, and, faix, she has a great look of the family."

"Well, Mickey, I'll leave you twenty-four hours to cultivate the acquaintance; and to a man like you the time, I know, is ample. Follow me by the morning's coach. Till then, good-by."

Away we rattled once more, and soon left the town behind us. The wild mountain tract which stretched on either side of the road presented one bleak and brown surface, unrelieved by any trace of tillage or habitation; an apparently endless succession of fern-clad hills lay on every side; above, the gloomy sky of leaden, lowering aspect, frowned darkly; the sad and wailing cry of the pewet or the plover was the only sound that broke the stillness, and far as the eye could reach, a dreary waste extended. The air, too, was cold and chilly; it was one of those days which, in our springs, seemed to cast a retrospective glance towards the winter they have left behind them. The prospect was no cheering one; from heaven above or earth below there came no sight nor sound of gladness. The rich glow of the Peninsular landscape was still fresh in my memory, — the luxurious verdure; the olive, the citron, and the vine; the fair valleys teeming with abundance; the mountains terraced with their vineyards; the blue transparent sky spreading o'er all; while the very air was rife with the cheering song of birds that peopled every grove. What a contrast was here! We travelled on for miles, but no village nor one human face did we see. Far in the distance a thin wreath of smoke curled upward; but it came from no hearth; it arose from one of those field-fires by which spendthrift husbandry cultivates the ground. It was, indeed, sad; and yet, I know not how, it spoke more home to my heart than all the brilliant display and all the voluptuous splendor I had witnessed in London. By degrees some traces of wood made their appearance, and as we descended the mountain towards Cahir, the country assumed a more cultivated and cheerful look,—patches of corn or of meadow-land stretched on either side, and the voice of children and the lowing of oxen mingled with the cawing of the rooks, as in dense clouds they followed the ploughman's track. The changed features of the prospect resembled the alternate phases of temperament of the dweller on the soil,—the gloomy determination; the smiling carelessness; the dark spirit of boding; the reckless jollity; the almost savage ferocity of purpose, followed by a child-like docility and a womanly softness; the grave, the gay, the resolute, the fickle; the firm, the yielding, the unsparing, and the tender-hearted,—blending their contrarieties into one nature, of whose capabilities one cannot predicate the bounds, but to whom, by some luckless fatality of fortune, the great rewards of life have been generally withheld until one begins to feel that the curse of Swift was less the sarcasm wrung from indignant failures than the cold and stern prophecy of the moralist.

But how have I fallen into this strain! Let me rather turn my eyes forward towards my home. How shall I find all there? Have his altered fortunes damped the warm ardor of my poor uncle's heart? Is his smile sicklied over by sorrow; or shall I hear his merry laugh and his cheerful voice as in days of yore? How I longed to take my place beside that hearth, and in the same oak-chair where I have sat telling the bold adventures of a fox-chase or some long day upon the moors, speak of the scenes of my campaigning life, and make known to him those gallant fellows by whose side I have charged in battle, or sat in the bivouac! How will he glory in the soldier-like spirit and daring energy of Fred Power! How will he chuckle over the blundering earnestness and Irish warmth of O'Shaughnessy! How will he laugh at the quaint stories and quainter jests of Maurice Quill! And how often will he wish once more to be young in hand as in heart to mingle with such gay fellows, with no other care, no other sorrow, to depress him, save the passing fortune of a soldier's life!

CHAPTER XLII.

THE RETURN.

A RUDE shock awoke me as I lay asleep in the corner of the chaise; a shout followed, and the next moment the door was torn open, and I heard the postilion's voice crying to me: —

"Spring out! Jump out quickly, sir!"

A whole battery of kicks upon the front panel drowned the rest of his speech; but before I could obey his injunction, he was pitched upon the road, the chaise rolled over and the pole snapped short in the middle, while the two horses belabored the carriage and each other with all their might. Managing, as well as I was able, to extricate myself, I leaped out upon the road, and by the aid of a knife, and at the cost of some bruises, succeeded in freeing the horses from their tackle. The postboy, who had escaped without any serious injury, labored manfully to aid me, blubbering the whole time upon the consequences his misfortune would bring down upon his head.

"Bad luck to ye!" cried he, apostrophizing the off-horse, a tall, raw-boned beast, with a Roman nose, a dipped back, and a tail ragged and jagged like a hand-saw, — "bad luck to ye! there never was a good one of your color!"

This, for the information of the "unjockeyed," I may add, was a species of brindled gray.

"How did it happen, Patsey; how did it happen, my lad?"

"It was the heap o' stones they left in the road since last autumn; and though I riz him at it fairly, he dragged the ould mare over it and broke the pole. Oh, wirra, wirra!" cried he, wringing his hands in an agony of grief, "sure there 's neither luck nor grace to be had with ye since the day ye drew the judge down to the last assizes!"

"Well, what 's to be done?"

"Sorra a bit o' me knows; the shay 's ruined intirely, and the ould divil there knows he 's conquered us. Look at him there, listening to every word we 're saying! You eternal thief, may be its ploughing you 'd like better!"

"Come, come," said I, "this will never get us forward. What part of the country are we in?"

"We left Banagher about four miles behind us; that 's Killimur you see with the smoke there in the hollow."

Now, although I did not see Killimur (for the gray mist of the morning prevented me recognizing any object a few hundred yards distant), yet from the direction in which he pointed, and from the course of the Shannon, which I could trace indistinctly, I obtained a pretty accurate notion of where we were.

"Then we are not very far from Portumna?"

"Just a pleasant walk before your breakfast."

"And is there not a short cut to O'Malley Castle over that mountain?"

"Faix, and so there is; and ye can be no stranger to these parts if ye know that."

"I have travelled it before now. Just tell me, is the wooden bridge standing over the little stream? It used to be carried away every winter in my time."

"It 's just the same now. You 'll have to pass by the upper ford; but it comes to the same, for that will bring you to the back gate of the demesne, and one way is just as short as the other."

"I know it, I know it; so now, do you follow me with my luggage to the castle, and I 'll set out on foot."

So saying, I threw off my cloak, and prepared myself for a sharp walk of some eight miles over the mountain. As I reached the little knoll of land which, overlooking the Shannon, affords a view of several miles in every direction, I stopped to gaze upon the scene where every object around was familiar to me from infancy: the broad, majestic river, sweeping in bold curves between the wild mountains of Connaught and the wooded hills and cultivated slopes of the more fertile Munster; the tall chimneys of many a house rose above the dense woods where in my boyhood I had spent hours and days of happiness. One last look I turned towards the scene of my late catastrophe ere I began to descend the mountain. The postboy, with the happy fatalism of his country, and a firm trust in the future, had established himself in the interior of the chaise, from which a blue curl of smoke wreathed upward from his pipe; the horses grazed contentedly by the roadside; and were I to judge from the evidence before me, I should say that I was the only member of the party inconvenienced by the accident. A thin sleeting of rain began to fall; the wind blew sharply in my face, and the dark clouds, collecting in masses above, seemed to threaten a storm. Without stopping for even a passing look at the many well-known spots about, I pressed rapidly on. My old experience upon the moors had taught me that sling trot in which jumping from hillock to hillock over the boggy surface, you succeed in accomplishing your journey not only with considerable speed, but perfectly dryshod.

By the lonely path which I travelled, it was unlikely I should meet any one. It was rarely traversed except by the foot of the sportsman, or some stray messenger from the castle to the town of Banagher. Its solitude, however, was in no wise distasteful to me; my heart was full to bursting. Each moment as I walked some new feature of my home presented itself before me. Now it was all happiness and comfort; the scene of its ancient hospitable board, its warm hearth, its happy faces, and its ready welcome were all before me, and I increased my speed to the utmost, when suddenly a sense of sad and sorrowing foreboding would draw around me, and the image of my uncle's sick-bed, his worn features, his pallid look, his broken voice would strike upon my heart, and all the changes that poverty, desertion, and decay can bring to pass would fall upon my heart, and weak and trembling I would stand for some moments unable to proceed.

Oh, how many a reproachful thought came home to me at what I scrupled not to call to myself the desertion of my home! Oh, how many a prayer I uttered, in all the fervor of devotion, that my selfish waywardness and my yearning for ambition might not bring upon me, in after-life, years of unavailing regret! As I thought thus, I reached the brow of a little mountain ridge, beneath which, at a distance of scarcely more than a mile, the dark woods of O'Malley Castle stretched before me. The house itself was not visible, for it was situated in a valley beside the river. But there lay the whole scene of my boyhood: there the little creek where my boat was kept, and where I landed on the morning after my duel with Bodkin; there stretched for many a mile the large, callow meadows, where I trained my horses, and schooled them for the coming season; and far in the distance, the brown and rugged peak of old Scariff was lost in the clouds. The rain by this time had ceased, the wind had fallen, and an almost unnatural stillness prevailed around; but yet the heavy masses of vapor frowned ominously, and the leaden hue of land and water wore a gloomy and depressing aspect. My impatience to get on increased every moment, and descending the mountain at the top of my speed, I at length reached the little oak paling that skirted the wood, opened the little wicket, and entered the path. It was the selfsame one I had trod in revery and meditation the night before I left my home. I remember, too, sitting down beside the little well which, enclosed in a frame of rock, ran trickling across the path to be lost among the gnarled roots and fallen leaves around. Yes, this was the very spot.

Overcome for the instant by my exertion and by my emotion, I sat down upon the stone, and taking off my cap, bathed my heated and throbbing temples in the cold spring. Refreshed at once, I was about to rise and press onward, when suddenly my attention was caught by a sound which, faint from distance, scarce struck upon my ear. I listened again; but all was still and silent, the dull plash of the river as it broke upon the reedy shore was the only sound I heard. Thinking it probably some mere delusion of my heated imagination, I rose to push forward; but at the moment a slight breeze stirred in the leaves around me, the light branches rustled and bent beneath it, and a low moaning sound swelled upward, increasing each instant as it came; like the distant roar of some mighty torrent it grew louder as the wind bore it towards me, and now falling, now swelling, it burst forth into one loud, prolonged cry of agony and grief. O God! it was the death-wail! I fell upon my knees, my hands clasped in agony; the sweat of misery dropped off my brow, and with a heart bleeding and breaking I prayed — I know not what. Again the terrible cry smote upon my ear, and I could mark the horrible cadences of the death-song, as the voices of the mourners joined in chorus.

My suspense became too great to bear. I dashed madly forward, one sound still ringing in my ears, one horrid image before my eyes. I reached the garden-wall; I cleared the little rivulet beside the flower-garden; I traversed its beds (neglected and decayed); I gained the avenue, taking no heed of the crowds before me, — some on foot, some on horseback, others mounted upon the low country car, many seated in groups upon the grass, their heads bowed upon their bosoms, silent and speechless. As I neared the house the whole approach was crowded with carriages and horsemen. At the foot of the large flight of steps stood the black and mournful hearse, its plumes nodding in the breeze. With the speed of madness and the recklessness of despair I tore my way through the thickly-standing groups upon the steps; I could not speak, I could not utter. Once more the frightful cry swelled upward, and in its wild notes seemed to paralyze me; for with my hands upon my temples, I stood motionless and still. A heavy footfall as of persons marching in procession came nearer and nearer, and as the sounds without sank into sobs of bitterness and woe, the black pall of a coffin, borne on men's shoulders, appeared at the door, and an old man whose gray hair floated in the breeze, and across whose stern features a struggle for self-mastery — a kind of spasmodic effort — was playing, held out his hand to enforce silence. His eye, lacklustre and dimmed with age, roved over the assembled multitude, but there was no recognition in his look until at last he turned it on me. A slight hectic flush colored his pale cheek, his lip trembled, he essayed to speak, but could not. I sprang towards him, but choked by agony, I could not utter; my look, however, spoke what my tongue could not. He threw his arms around me, and muttering the words, "Poor Godfrey!" pointed to the coffin.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOME.

Many, many years have passed away since the time I am now about to speak of, and yet I cannot revert, even for a moment, to the period without a sad and depressing feeling at my heart. The wreck of fortune, the thwarting of ambition, the failure in enterprise, great though they be, are endurable evils. The never-dying hope that youth is blessed with will find its resting-place still within the breast, and the baffled and beaten will struggle on unconquered; but for the death of friends, for the loss of those in whom our dearest affections were centred, there is no solace, — the terrible "never" of the grave knows no remorse, and even memory, that in our saddest hours can bring bright images and smiling faces before us, calls up here only the departed shade of happiness, a passing look at that Eden of our joys from which we are separated forever. And the desolation of the heart is never perfect till it has felt the echoes of a last farewell on earth reverberating within it.

Oh, with what tortures of self-reproach we think of all former intercourse with him that is gone! How would we wish to live our lives once more, correcting each passage of unkindness or neglect! How deeply do we blame ourselves for occasions of benefit lost, and opportunities unprofited by; and how unceasingly, through after-life, the memory of the departed recurs to us! In all the ties which affection and kindred weave around us, one vacant spot is there, unseen and unknown by others, which no blandishments of love, no caresses of friendship can fill up; although the rank grass and the tall weeds of the churchyard may close around the humble tomb, the cemetery of the heart is holy and sacred, pure from all the troubled thoughts and daily cares of the busy world. To that hallowed spot do we retire as into our chamber, and when unrewarded efforts bring discomfiture and misery to our minds, when friends are false, and cherished hopes are blasted, we think on those who never ceased to love till they had ceased to live; and in the lonely solitude of our affliction we call upon those who hear not, and may never return.

Mine was a desolate hearth. I sat moodily down in the old oak parlor, my heart bowed down with grief. The noiseless steps, the mourning garments of the old servants; the unnatural silence of those walls within which from my infancy the sounds of merriment and mirth had been familiar; the large old-fashioned chair where he was wont to sit, now placed against the wall, — all spoke of the sad past. Yet, when some footsteps would draw near, and the door would open, I could not repress a thrill of hope that he was coming; more than once I rushed to the window and looked out; I could have sworn I heard his voice.

The old cob pony he used to ride was grazing peacefully before the door; poor Carlo, his favorite spaniel, lay stretched upon the terrace, turning ever and anon a look towards the window, and then, as if wearied of watching for him who came not, he would utter a long, low, wailing cry, and lie down again to sleep. The rich lawn, decked with field flowers of many a hue, stretched away towards the river, upon whose calm surface the white-sailed lugger scarce seemed to move; the sounds of a well-known Irish air came, softened by distance, as some poor fisherman sat mending his net upon the bank, and the laugh of children floated on the breeze. Yes, they were happy.

Two months had elapsed since my return home; how passed by me I know not; a lethargic stupor had settled upon me. Whole days long I sat at the window, looking listlessly at the tranquil river, and watching the white foam as, borne down from the rapids, it floated lazily along. The count had left me soon, being called up to Dublin by some business, and I was utterly alone. The different families about called frequently to ask after me, and would, doubtless, have done all in their power to alleviate my sorrow, and lighten the load of my affliction; but with a morbid fear, I avoided every one, and rarely left the house except at night-fall, and then only to stroll by some lonely and deserted path.

Life had lost its charm for me; my gratified ambition had ended in the blackest disappointment, and all for which I had labored and longed was only attained that I might feel it valueless.

Of my circumstances as to fortune I knew nothing, and cared not more; poverty and riches could matter little now; all my day-dreams were dissipated now, and. I only waited for Considine's return to leave Ireland forever. I had made up my mind, if by any unexpected turn of fate the war should cease in the Peninsula, to exchange into an Indian regiment. The daily association with objects which recalled but one image to my brain, and that ever accompanied by remorse of conscience, gave me not a moment's peace. My every thought of happiness was mixed up with scenes which now presented nothing but the evidences of blighted hope; to remain, then, where I was, would be to sink into the heartless misanthropist, and I resolved that with my sword I would carve out a soldier's fortune and a soldier's grave.

Considine came at last. I was sitting alone, at my usual post beside the window, when the chaise rattled up to the door; for an instant I started to my legs; a vague sense of something like hope shot through me, the whole might be a dream, and *he* — The next moment I became cold and sick, a faintish giddiness obscured my sight, and though I felt his grasp as he took my hand, I saw him not.

An indistinct impression still dwells upon my mind of his chiding me for my weakness in thus giving way; of his calling upon me to assert my position, and discharge the duties of him whose successor I now was. I heard him in silence; and when he concluded, faintly pledging myself to obey him, I hurried to my room, and throwing myself upon my bed burst into an agony of tears. Hitherto my pent-up sorrow had wasted me day by day; but the rock was now smote, and in that gush of misery my heart found relief.

When I appeared the following morning, the count was struck with my altered looks; a settled sorrow could not conceal the changes which time and manhood had made upon me; and as from a kind of fear of showing how deeply I grieved, I endeavored to conceal it, by degrees I was enabled to converse calmly and dispassionately upon my fortunes.

"Poor Godfrey," said he, "appointed me his sole executor a few days before it happened; he knew the time was drawing near, and strange enough, Charley, though he heard of your return to England, he would not let us write. The papers spoke of you as being at Carlton House almost daily; your name appeared at every great festival; and while his heart warmed at your brilliant success, he absolutely dreaded your coming home. 'Poor fellow,' he would say, 'what a change for him, to leave the splendor and magnificence of his Prince's board for our meagre fare and altered fortunes! And then,' he added, 'as for me — God forgive me! — I can go now; but how should I bear to part with him if he comes back to me.' And now," said the count, when he had concluded a detailed history of my dear uncle's last illness, — "and now, Charley, what are your plans?"

Briefly, and in a few words, I stated to him my intentions. Without placing much stress upon the strongest of my reasons — my distaste to what had once been home — I avowed my wish to join my regiment at once.

He heard me with evident impatience, and as I finished, seized my arm in his strong grasp. "No, no, boy, none of this; your tone of assumed composure cannot impose on Bill Considine. You must not return to the Peninsula — at least not yet awhile; the disgust of life may be strong at twenty, but it's not lasting; besides, Charley," here his voice faltered slightly, "*his* wishes you'll not treat lightly. Read this."

As he spoke, he took a blotted and ill-written letter from his breast-pocket, and handed it to me. It was in my poor uncle's hand, and dated the very morning of his death. It ran thus: —

DEAR BILL, — Charley must never part with the old house, come what will; I leave too many ties behind for a stranger's heritage; he must live among my old friends, and watch, protect and comfort them. He has done enough for fame; let him now do something for affection. We have none of us been over good to these poor people; one of the name must try and save our credit. God bless you both! It is, perhaps, the last time I shall utter it.

G. O'M.

I read these few and, to me, affecting lines over and over, forgetful of all save of him who penned them; when Considine, who supposed that my silence was attributable to doubt and hesitation, called out: —

"Well, what now?"

"I remain," said I, briefly.

He seized me in his arms with transport, as he said: —

"I knew it, boy, I knew it. They told me you were spoiled by flattery, and your head turned by fortune; they said that home and country would weigh lightly in the balance against fame and glory; but I said no, I knew you better. I told them indignantly that I had nursed you on my knee; that I watched you from infancy to boyhood, from boy to man; that he of whose stock you came had one feeling paramount to all, his love of his own fatherland, and that you would not disgrace him. Besides, Charley, there 's not an humble hearth for many a long mile around us, where, amidst the winter's blast, tempered not excluded, by frail walls and poverty, — there 's not one such but where poor Godfrey's name rises each night in prayer, and blessings are invoked on him by those who never felt them themselves."

"I 'll not desert them."

"I know you 'll not, boy, I know you 'll not. Now for the means."

Here he entered into a long and complicated exposure of my dear uncle's many difficulties, by which it appeared that, in order to leave the estate free of debt to me, he had for years past undergone severe privations. These, however, — such is the misfortune of an unguided effort, — had but ill succeeded, and there was scarcely a farm on the property without its mortgage. Upon the house and demesne a bond for three thousand pounds still remained; and to pay off this, Considine advised my selling a portion of the property.

"It 's old Blake lent the money; and only a week before your uncle died, he served a notice for repayment. I never told Godfrey; it was no use. It could only embitter his last few hours; and, besides, we had six months to think of it. The half of that time has now elapsed, however; we must see to this."

"And did Blake really make this demand, knowing my poor uncle's difficulties?"

"Why, I half think he did not; for Godfrey was too fine a fellow ever to acknowledge anything of the sort. He had twelve sheep killed for the poor in Scariff, at a time when not a servant of the house tasted meat for months; ay, and our own table, too, none of the most abundant, I assure you."

What a picture was this, and how forcibly did it remind me of what I had witnessed in times past. Thus meditating, we returned to the house; and Considine, whose activity never slumbered, sat down to con over the rent-roll with old Maguire the steward.

When I joined the count in the evening, I found him surrounded by maps, rent-rolls, surveys, and leases. He had been poring over these various documents, to ascertain from which portion of the property we could best recruit our failing finances. To judge from the embarrassed look and manner with which he met me, the matter was one of no small difficulty. The encumbrances upon the estate had been incurred with an unsparing hand; and except where some irreclaimable tract of bog or mountain rendered a loan impracticable, each portion of the property had its share of debt.

"You can't sell Killantry, for Basset has above six thousand pounds on it already. To be sure, there 's the Priest's Meadows, — fine land and in good heart; but Malony was an old tenant of the family, and I cannot recommend your turning him over to a stranger. The widow M'Bride's farm is perhaps the best, after all, and it would certainly bring the sum we want; still, poor Mary was your nurse, Charley, and it would break her heart to do it."

Thus, wherever we turned, some obstacle presented itself, if not from moneyed causes, at least from those ties and associations which, in an attached and faithful tenantry, are sure to grow up between them and the owner of the soil.

Feeling how all-important these things were — endeavoring as I was to fulfil the will and work out the intentions of my uncle — I saw at once that to sell any portion of the property must separate me, to a certain extent, from those who long looked up to our house, and who, in the feudalism of the west, could ill withdraw their allegiance from their own chief to swear fealty to a stranger. The richer tenants were those whose industry and habits rendered them objects of worth and attachment; to the poorer ones, to whose improvidence and whose follies (if you will) their poverty was owing, I was bound by those ties which the ancient habit of my house had contracted for centuries. The bond of benefit conferred can be stronger than the debt of gratitude itself. What was I then to do? My income would certainly permit of my paying the interest upon my several mortgages, and still retaining wherewithal to live; the payment of Blake's bond was my only difficulty, and small as it was, it was still a difficulty.

"I have it, Charley!" said Considine; "I've found out the way of doing it. Blake will have no objection, I'm sure, to take the widow's farm in payment of his debt, giving you a power of redemption within five years. In that time, what with economy, some management, perhaps," added he, smiling slightly, — "perhaps a wife with money may relieve all your embarrassments at once. Well, well, I know you are not thinking of that just now; but come, what say you to my plan?"

"I know not well what to say. It seems to be the best; but still I have my misgivings."

"Of course you have, my boy; nor could I love you if you'd part with an old and faithful follower without them. But, after all, she is only a hostage to the enemy; we'll win her back, Charley."

"If you think so —"

"I do. I know it."

"Well, then, be it so; only one thing I bargain, — she must herself consent to this change of masters. It will seem to her a harsh measure that the child she had nursed and fondled in her arms should live to disunite her from those her oldest attachments upon earth. We must take care, sir, that Blake cannot dispossess her; this would be too hard."

"No, no; that we'll guard against. And now, Charley, with prudence and caution, we'll clear off every encumbrance, and O'Malley Castle shall yet be what it was in days of yore. Ay, boy, with the descendant of the old house for its master, and not that general — how do you call him? — that came down here to contest the county, who with his offer of thirty thousand pounds thought to uproot the oldest family of the west. Did I ever show you the letter we wrote him?"

"No, sir," replied I, trembling with agitation as I spoke; "you merely alluded to it in one of yours."

"Look here, lad!" said he, drawing it from the recesses of a black leather pocket-book. "I took a copy of it; read that."

The document was dated, "O'Malley Castle, December 9th." It ran thus: —

Sir, — I have this moment learned from my agent, that you, or some one empowered by you for the purpose, made an offer of several thousand pounds to buy up the different mortgages upon my property, with a subsequent intention of becoming its possessor. Now, sir, I beg to tell you, that if your ungentlemanlike and underhand plot had succeeded, you dared not darken with your shadow the door-sill of the house you purchased. Neither your gold nor your flattery — and I hear you are rich in both — could wipe out from the minds and hearts of my poor tenantry the kindness of centuries. Be advised, then, sir; withdraw your offer; let a Galway gentleman settle his own difficulties his own way; his troubles and cares are quite sufficient, without your adding to them. There can be but one mode in which your interference with him could be deemed acceptable: need I tell you, sir, who are a soldier, how that is? As I know your official duties are important, and as my nephew — who feels with me perfectly in this business — is abroad, I can only say that failing health and a broken frame shall not prevent my undertaking a journey to England, should my doing so meet your wishes on this occasion. I am, sir,

Your obedient servant, GODFREY O'MALLEY.

"This letter," continued Considine, "I enclosed in an envelope, with the following few lines of my own:"—

"Count Considine presents his compliments to Lieutenant-General Dashwood; and feeling that as the friend of Mr. Godfrey O'Malley, the mild course pursued by that gentleman may possibly be attributed to his suggestion, he begs to assure General Dashwood that the reverse was the case, and that he strenuously counselled the propriety of laying a horsewhip upon the general's shoulders, as a preliminary step in the transaction.

"Count Considine's address is No. 16 Kildare Street."

"Great God!" said I, "is this possible?"

"Well may you say so, my boy: for — would you believe it? — after all that, he writes a long blundering apology, protesting I know not what about motives of former friendship, and terminating with a civil hint that we have done with him forever. And of my paragraph he takes no notice; and thus ends the whole affair."

"And with it my last hope also!" muttered I to myself.

That Sir George Dashwood's intentions had been misconstrued and mistaken I knew perfectly well; that nothing but the accumulated evils of poverty and sickness could have induced my poor uncle to write such a letter I was well aware; but now the mischief was accomplished, the evil was done, and nothing remained but to bear with patience and submission, and to endeavor to forget what thus became irremediable.

"Sir George Dashwood made no allusion to me, sir, in his reply?" inquired I, catching at anything like a hope.

"Your name never occurs in his letter. But you look pale, boy; all these discussions come too early upon you; besides, you stay too much at home, and take no exercise."

So saying, Considine bustled off towards the stables to look after some young horses that had just been taken up; and I walked out alone to ponder over what I had heard, and meditate on my plans for the future.

CHAPTER XLIV.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

As I wandered on, the irritation of my spirit gradually subsided. It was, to be sure, distressing to think over the light in which my uncle's letter had placed me before Sir George Dashwood, had even my reputation only with him been at stake; but with my attachment to his daughter, it was almost maddening. And yet there was nothing to be done; to disavow my participation would be to throw discredit upon my uncle. Thus were my hopes blighted; and thus, at that season when life was opening upon me, did I feel careless and indifferent to everything. Had my military career still remained to me, that at least would have suggested scenes sufficient to distract me from the past; but now my days must be spent where every spot teemed with memories of bygone happiness and joys never to come back again.

My mind was, however, made up; and without speaking a word to Considine, I turned homeward, and sat down at my writing-table. In a few brief lines I informed my army agent of my intention of leaving the service, and desired that he would sell out for me at once. Fearing lest my resolution might not be proof against the advice and solicitation of my friends, I cautioned him against giving my address, or any clew by which letters might reach me.

This done, I addressed a short note to Mr. Blake, requesting to know the name of his solicitor, in whose hands the bond was placed, and announcing my intention of immediate repayment.

Trifling as these details were in themselves, I cannot help recording how completely they changed the whole current of my thoughts. A new train of interests began to spring up within me; and where so lately the clang of the battle, the ardor of the march, the careless ease of the bivouac, had engrossed every feeling, now more humble and homely thoughts succeeded; and as my personal ambition had lost its stimulant, I turned with pleasure to those of whose fate and fortunes I was in some sort the guardian. There may be many a land where the verdure blooms more in fragrance and in richness, where the clime breathes softer, and a brighter sky lights up the landscape; but there is none — I have travelled through many a one — where more touching and heart-bound associations are blended with the features of the soil than in Ireland, and cold must be the spirit, and barren the affections of him who can dwell amidst its mountains and its valleys, its tranquil lakes, its wooded fens, without feeling their humanizing influence upon him. Thus gradually new impressions and new duties succeeded; and ere four months elapsed, the quiet monotony of my daily life healed up the wounds of my suffering, and in the calm current of my present existence, a sense of content, if not of happiness, crept gently over me, and I ceased to long for the clash of arms and the loud blast of the trumpet.

Unlike all my former habits, I completely abandoned the sports of the field. He who had participated in them with me was no longer there; and the very sight of the tackle itself suggested sad and depressing thoughts.

My horses I took but little pleasure in. To gratify the good and kind people about, I would walk through the stables, and make some passing remark, as if to show some interest; but I felt it not. No; it was only by the total change of all the ordinary channels of my ideas that I could bear up; and now my days were passed in the fields, either listlessly strolling along, or in watching the laborers as they worked. Of my neighbors I saw nothing; returning their cards, when they called upon me, was the extent of our intercourse; and I had no desire for any further. As Considine had left me to visit some friends in the south, I was quite alone, and for the first time in my life, felt how soothing can be such solitude. In each happy face, in every grateful look around me, I felt that I was fulfilling my uncle's last behest; and the sense of duty, so strong when it falls upon the heart accompanied by the sense of power, made my days pass rapidly away.

It was towards the close of autumn, when I one morning received a letter from London, informing me that my troop had been sold, and the purchase money — above four thousand pounds — lodged to my credit at my banker's.

As Mr. Blake had merely answered my former note by a civil message that the matter in question was by no means pressing, I lost not a moment, when this news reached me, to despatch Mike to Gurt-na-Morra with a few lines, expressing my anxious desire to finish the transaction, and begging of Mr. Blake to appoint a day for the purpose.

To this application Mr. Blake's reply was, that he would do himself the honor of waiting upon me the following day, when the arrangements I desired could be agreed upon. Now this was exactly what I wished, if possible, to avoid. Of all my neighbors, he was the one I predetermined to have no intercourse with; I had not forgotten my last evening at his house, nor had I forgiven his conduct to my uncle. However, there was nothing for it but submission; the interview need not be a long, and it should be a last one. Thus resolving, I waited in patience for the morrow.

I was seated at my breakfast the next morning, conning between whiles the columns of the last paper, and feeding my spaniel, who sat upon a large chair beside me, when the door opened, and the servant announced, "Mr. Blake;" and the instant after that gentleman bustled in holding out both his hands with all evidences of most friendly warmth, and calling out, —

"Charley O'Malley, my lad! I'm delighted to see you at last!"

Now, although the distance from the door to the table at which I sat was not many paces, yet it was quite sufficient to chill down all my respectable relative's ardor before he approached: his rapid pace became gradually a shuffle, a slide, and finally a dead stop; his extended arms were reduced to one hand, barely advanced beyond his waistcoat; his voice, losing the easy confidence of its former tone, got husky and dry, and broke into a cough; and all these changes were indebted to the mere fact of my reception of him consisting in a cold and distant bow, as I told the servant to place a chair and leave the room.

Without any preliminary whatever, I opened the subject of our negotiation, expressed my regret that it should have waited so long, and my desire to complete it.

Whether it was that the firm and resolute tone I assumed had its effect at once, or that disappointed at the mode in which I received his advances he wished to conclude our interview as soon as need be, I know not; but he speedily withdrew from a capacious pocket a document in parchment, which, having spread at large upon the table, and having leisurely put on his spectacles, he began to hum over its contents to himself in an undertone.

"Yes, sir, here it is," said he. "'Deed of conveyance between Godfrey O'Malley, of O'Malley Castle, Esq., on the one part'— perhaps you'd like your solicitor to examine it,—'and Blake, of Gurt'— because there is no hurry, Captain O'Malley —'on the other.' In fact, after all, it is a mere matter of form between relatives," said he, as I declined the intervention of a lawyer. "I'm not in want of the money —'all the lands and tenements adjoining, in trust, for the payment of the said three thousand'— thank God, Captain, the sum is a trifle that does not inconvenience me! The boys are provided for; and the girls — the pickpockets, as I call them, ha, ha, ha! — not ill off neither; —'with rights of turbary on the said premises'— who are most anxious to have the pleasure of seeing you. Indeed, I could scarcely keep Jane from coming over to-day. 'Sure he's my cousin,' says she; 'and what harm would it be if I went to see him?' Wild, good-natured girls, Captain! And your old friend Matthew — you have n't forgot Matthew? — has been keeping three coveys of partridge for you this fortnight. 'Charley,' says he, — they call you Charley still, Captain, —'shall have them, and no one else.' And poor Mary — she was a child when you were here — Mary is working a sash for you. But I'm forgetting — I know you have so much business on your hands —"

"Pray, Mr. Blake, be seated. I know nothing of any more importance than the matter before us. If you will permit me to give you a check for this money. The papers, I'm sure, are perfectly correct."

"If I only thought it did not inconvenience you —"

"Nothing of the kind, I assure you. Shall I say at sight, or in ten days hence ?"

"Whenever you please, Captain. But it 's sorry I am to come troubling you about such things, when I know you are thinking of other matters. And, as I said before, the money does not signify to me; the times, thank God, are good, and I 've never been very improvident."

"I think you 'll find that correct."

"Oh, to be sure it is! Well, well; I 'm going away without saying half what I intended."

"Pray do not hurry yourself. I have not asked have you breakfasted, for I remember Galway habits too well for that. But if I might offer you a glass of sherry and water after your ride ?"

"Will you think me a beast if I say yes, Captain ? Time was when I did n't care for a canter of ten or fifteen miles in the morning no more than yourself; and that 's no small boast; God forgive me, but I never see that clover-field where you pounded the Englishman, without swearing there never was a leap made before or since. Is this Mickey, Captain ? Faith, and it 's a fine, brown, hearty-looking chap you 're grown, Mickey. That 's mighty pleasant sherry, but where would there be good wine if it was n't here ? Oh, I remember now what it was I wanted. Peter, — my son Peter, a slip of a boy, he 's only sixteen, — well, d' you see, he 's downright deranged about the army: he used to see your name in the papers every day, and that terrible business at — what 's the name of the place ? — where you rode on the chap 's back up the breach."

"Ciudad Rodrigo, perhaps," said I, scarcely able to repress a laugh.

"Well, sir, since that he 'll hear of nothing but going into the army; ay, and into the dragoons too. Now, Captain, is n't it mighty expensive in the dragoons ?"

"Why, no, not particularly so, — at least in the regiment I served with."

"I promised him I 'd ask you; the boy 's mad, that 's the fact. I wish, Captain, you 'd just reason with him a little; he 'll mind what *you* say, there 's no fear of that. And you see, though I 'd like to do what 's fair, I 'm not going to cut off the girls for the sake of the boys; with the blessing of Providence, they 'll never be able to reproach me for that. What I say is this: treat *me* well, and I 'll treat you the same. Marry the man my choice would pick out for you, and it's not a matter of a thousand or two I'll care for. There was Bodkin — you remember him?" said he, with a grin; "he proposed for Mary, but since the quarrel with you, she could never bear the sight of him, and Alley would n't come down to dinner if he was in the house. Mary 's greatly altered; I wish you heard her sing 'I 'd mourn the hopes that leave me.' Queer girl she is; she was little more than a child when you were here, and she remembers you just as if it was yesterday."

While Mr. Blake ran on at this rate, now dilating upon my own manifold virtues and accomplishments, now expatiating upon the more congenial theme, — the fascinations of his fair daughters, and the various merits of his sons, — I could not help feeling how changed our relative position was since our last meeting; the tone of cool and vulgar patronage he then assumed towards the unformed country lad was now converted into an air of fawning and deferential submission, still more distasteful.

Young as I was, however, I had already seen a good deal of the world; my soldiering had at least taught me something of men, and I had far less difficulty in deciphering the intentions and objects of my worthy relative, than I should have had in the enigmatical mazes of the parchment bond of which he was the bearer. After all, to how very narrow an extent in life are we fashioned by our own estimate of ourselves! My changed condition affected me but little until I saw how it affected others; that the position I occupied should seem better now that life had lost the great stimulus of ambition, was somewhat strange; and that flattery should pay its homage to the mourning coat which it would have refused to my soldier's garb, somewhat surprised me. Still my bettered fortunes shone only brightly by reflected light; for in my own heart I was sad, spiritless, and oppressed.

Feeling somewhat ashamed at the coldness with which I treated a man so much my elder, I gradually assumed towards Mr. Blake a manner less reserved. He quickly availed himself of the change, and launched out into an eloquent *exposé* of my advantages and capabilities; the only immediate effect of which was to convince me that my property and my prospects must have been very accurately conned over and considered by that worthy gentleman before he could speak of the one or the other with such perfect knowledge.

"When you get rid of these little encumbrances, your rent-roll will be close on four thousand a year. There's Bassett, sure, by only reducing his interest from ten to five per cent, will give you a clear eight hundred per annum; let him refuse, and I'll advance the money. And, besides, look at Freney's farm; there's two hundred acres let for one third of the value, and you must look to these things; for, you see, Captain, we'll want you to go into Parliament; you can't help coming forward at the next election, and by the great gun of Athlone, we'll return you."

Here Mr. Blake swallowed a full bumper of sherry, and getting up a little false enthusiasm for the moment, grasped me by both hands and shook me violently; this done, like a skilful general, who, having fired the last shot of his artillery, takes care to secure his retreat, he retired towards the door, where his hat and coat were lying.

"I've a hundred apologies to make for encroaching upon your time; but, upon my soul, Captain, you are so agreeable, and the hours have passed away so pleasantly — May I never, if it is not one o'clock! — but you must forgive me."

My sense of justice, which showed me that the agreeability had all been on Mr. Blake's side, prevented me from acknowledging this compliment as it deserved; so I merely bowed stiffly, without speaking. By this time he had succeeded in putting on his great-coat, but still, by some mischance or other, the moment of his leaving-taking was deferred; one time he buttoned it awry, and had to undo it all again; then, when it was properly adjusted, he discovered that his pocket-handkerchief was not available, being left in the inner coat-pocket; to this succeeded a doubt as to the safety of the check, which instituted another search, and it was full ten minutes before he was completely caparisoned and ready for the road.

"Good-by, Captain, good-by!" said he warmly, yet warily, not knowing at what precise temperature the metal of my heart was fusible. At a mild heat I had been evidently unsinged, and the white glow of his flattery seemed only to harden me. The interview was now over, and as I thought sufficient had been done to convince my friend that the terms of distant acquaintance were to be the limits of our future intercourse, I assumed a little show of friendliness, and shook his hand warmly.

"Good-by, Mr. Blake; pray present my respectful compliments to your friends. Allow me to ring for your horse; you are not going to have a shower, I hope."

"No, no, Captain, only a passing cloud," said he, warming up perceptibly under the influence of my advances, "nothing more. Why, what is it I'm forgetting now! Oh, I have it! May be I'm too bold; but sure an old friend and relation may take a liberty sometimes. It was just a little request of Mrs. Blake, as I was leaving the house." He stopped here as if to take soundings, and perceiving no change in my countenance, continued: "It was just to beg, that, in a kind and friendly way, you'd come over and eat your dinner with us on Sunday; nobody but the family, not a soul — Mrs. Blake and the girls; a boiled leg of mutton; Matthew; a fresh trout, if we can catch one! Plain and homely, but a hearty welcome, and a bottle of old claret, may be, too — ah! ah! ah!"

Before the cadence of Mr. Blake's laugh had died away, I politely but resolutely declined the proffered invitation, and by way of setting the question at rest forever, gave him to understand that, from impaired health and other causes, I had resolved upon strictly confining myself to the limits of my own house and grounds, at least for the present.

Mr. Blake then saluted me for the last time, and left the room. As he mounted his hackney, I could not help overhearing an abortive effort he made to draw Mike into something like conversation; but it proved an utter failure, and it was evident he deemed the man as incorrigible as the master.

"A very fine young man the captain is — remarkable! — and it 's proud I am to have him for a nephew!"

So saying, he cantered down the avenue, while Mickey, as he looked after him, muttered between his teeth, "And faix, it 's prouder you 'd be av he was your son-in-law!"

Mike's soliloquy seemed to show me, in a new light, the meaning of my relative's manner. It was for the first time in my life that such a thought had occurred to me, and it was not without a sense of shame that I now admitted it.

If there be something which elevates and exalts us in our esteem, tinging our hearts with heroism and our souls with pride, in the love and attachment of some fair and beautiful girl, there is something equally humiliating in being the object of cold and speculative calculation to a match-making family: your character studied; your pursuits watched; your tastes conned over; your very temperament inquired into; surrounded by snares; environed by practised attentions; one eye fixed upon the registered testament of your relative, the other riveted upon your own caprices; and then those thousand little cares and kindnesses which come so pleasurably upon the heart when the offspring of true affection, perverted as they are by base views and sordid interest, are so many shocks to the feeling and understanding. Like the Eastern sirocco, which seems to breathe of freshness and of health, and yet bears but pestilence and death upon its breezes, — so these calculated and well-considered traits of affection only render callous and harden the heart which had responded warmly, openly, and abundantly to the true outpourings of affection. At how many a previously happy hearth has the seed of this fatal passion planted its discord! How many a fair and lovely girl, with beauty and attractions sufficient to win all that her heart could wish of fondness and devotion, has, by this pernicious passion, become a cold, heartless, worldly coquette, weighing men's characters by the adventitious circumstances of their birth and fortune, and scrutinizing the eligibility of a match with the practised acumen with which a notary investigates the solvency of a creditor. How do the traits of beauty, gesture, voice, and manner become converted into the common-place and distasteful trickery of the world! The very hospitality of the house becomes suspect, their friendship is but fictitious; those rare and goodly gifts of fondness and sisterly affection which grow up in happier circumstances, are here but rivalry, envy, and ill-conceived hatred. The very accomplishments which cultivate and adorn life, that light but graceful frieze which girds the temple of homely happiness, are here but the meditated and well-considered occasions of display. All the bright features of womanhood, all the freshness of youth, and all its fascinations are but like those richly-colored and beautiful fruits, seductive to the eye and fair to look upon, but which within contain nothing but a core of rottenness and decay.

No, no; unblessed by all which makes a hearth a home, I may travel on my weary way through life; but such a one as this I will not make the partner of my sorrows and my joys, come what will of it!

CHAPTER XLV.

A SURPRISE.

From the hour of Mr. Blake's departure, my life was no longer molested. My declaration, which had evidently, under his auspices, been made the subject of conversation through the country, was at least so far successful, as it permitted me to spend my time in the way I liked best, and without the necessity of maintaining the show of intercourse, when in reality I kept up none, with the neighborhood. While thus, therefore, my life passed on equably and tranquilly, many months glided over, and I found myself already a year at home, without it appearing more than a few weeks. Nothing seems so short in retrospect as monotony; the number, the variety, the interest of the events which occupy us, making our hours pass glibly and flowingly, will still suggest to the mind the impressions of a longer period than when the daily routine of our occupations assumes a character of continued uniformity. It seems to be the *amende* made by hours of weariness and tedium, that, in looking back upon them, they appear to have passed rapidly over. Not that my life, at the period I speak of, was devoid of interest; on the contrary, devoting myself with zeal and earnestness to the new duties of my station, I made myself thoroughly acquainted with the condition of my property, the interest of my tenantry, their prospects, their hopes, their objects. Investigating them as only he can who is the owner of the soil, I endeavored to remedy the ancient vices of the land, — the habits of careless, reckless waste, of indifference for the morrow; and by instilling a feature of prudent foresight into that boundless confidence in the future upon which every Irishman of every rank lives and trusts, I succeeded at last in so far ameliorating their situation, that a walk through my property, instead of presenting — as it at first did — a crowd of eager and anxious supplicants, entreating for abatements in rent, succor for their sick, and sometimes even food itself, showed me now a happy and industrious people, confident in themselves, and firmly relying on their own resources.

Another spring was now opening, and a feeling of calm and tranquil happiness, the result of my successful management of my estate, made my days pass pleasantly along. I was sitting at a late breakfast in my little library; the open window afforded a far and wide prospect of the country, blooming in all the promise of the season, while the drops of the passing shower still lingered upon the grass, and were sparkling like jewels under the bright sunshine. Masses of white and billowy cloud moved swiftly through the air, coloring the broad river with many a shadow as they passed. The birds sang merrily, the trees shook their leaves in concert, and there was that sense of movement in everything on earth and sky which gives to spring its character of lightness and exhilaration. The youth of the year, like the youth of our own existence, is beautiful in the restless activity which marks it. The tender flower that seems to open as we look; the grass that springs before our eyes, — all speak of promise. The changing phases of the sky, like the smiles and tears of infancy, excite without weariness, and while they engage our sympathies, they fatigue not our compassion.

Partly lost in thought as I looked upon the fair and varied scene before me, now turning to the pages of the book upon the breakfast-table, the hours of the morning passed quickly over, and it was already beyond noon. I was startled from my revery by sounds which I could scarcely trust my ears to believe real. I listened again, and thought I could detect them distinctly. It seemed as though some one were rapidly running over the keys of a pianoforte, essaying with the voice to follow the notes, and sometimes striking two or three bold and successive chords; then a merry laugh would follow, and drown all other sounds. "What can it be?" thought I. "There is, to be sure, a pianoforte in the large drawing-room; but then, who would venture upon such a liberty as this? Besides, who is capable of it? There, it can be no inexperienced performer gave that shake; my worthy housekeeper never accomplished that!" So saying, I jumped from the breakfast-table, and set off in the direction of the sound. A small drawing-room and the billiard-room lay between me and the large drawing-room; and as I traversed them, the music grew gradually louder. Conjecturing that, whoever it might be, the performance would cease on my entrance, I listened for a few moments before opening the door. Nothing could be more singular, nothing more strange, than the effect of those unaccustomed sounds in that silent and deserted place. The character of the music, too, contributed not a little to this; rapidly passing from grave to gay, from the melting softness of some plaintive air to the reckless hurry and confusion of an Irish jig, the player seemed, as it were, to run wild through all the floating fancies of his memory; now breaking suddenly off in the saddest cadence of a song, the notes would change into some quaint, old-fashioned crone, in which the singer seemed so much at home, and gave the queer drollery of the words that expression of archness so eminently the character of certain Irish airs. "But what the deuce is this?" said I, as, rattling over the keys with a flowing but brilliant finger, she, — for it was unquestionably a woman, — with a clear and sweet voice, broken by laughter, began to sing the words of Mr. Bodkin's song, "The Man for Galway." When she had finished the last verse, her hand strayed, as it were, carelessly across the instrument, while she herself gave way to a free burst of merriment; and then, suddenly resuming the air, she chanted forth the following words, with a spirit and effect I can convey no idea of: —

"To live at home,
And never roam;
To pass his days in sighing;
To wear sad looks,
Read stupid books,
And look half dead or dying;
Not show his face,
Nor join the chase,
But dwell a hermit always:
Oh, Charley, dear!
To me 't is clear,
You 're not the man for Galway!"

"You're not the man for Galway!" repeated she once more, while she closed the piano with a loud bang.

"And why not, my dear, why not the man for Galway?" said I, as, bursting open the door, I sprang into the room.

"Oh, it's you, is it?—at last! So I've unearthed you, have I?"

With these words she burst into an immoderate fit of laughter; leaving me, who intended to be the party giving the surprise, amazed, confused, and speechless, in the middle of the floor.

That my reader may sympathize a little in my distresses, let me present him with the *tableau* before me. Seated upon the piano-stool was a young lady of at most eighteen years: her face, had it not been for its expression of exuberant drollery and malicious fun, would have been downright beautiful; her eyes, of the deepest blue, and shaded by long lashes, instead of indulging the character of pensive and thoughtful beauty for which Nature destined them, sparkled with a most animated brightness; her nose, which, rather short, was still beautifully proportioned, gave, with her well-curled upper lip, a look of sauciness to the features quite bewitching; her hair — that brilliant auburn we see in a *Carlo Dolci* — fell in wild and massive curls upon her shoulders. Her costume was a dark-green riding-habit, not of the newest in its fashion, and displaying more than one rent in its careless folds; her hat, whip, and gloves lay on the floor beside her, and her whole attitude and bearing indicated the most perfect ease and carelessness.

"So you are caught — taken alive!" said she, as she pressed her hands upon her sides in a fresh burst of laughter.

"By Jove! this is a surprise indeed!" said I. "And, pray, into whose fair hands have I fallen a captive?" recovering myself a little, and assuming a half air of gallantry.

"So you don't know me, don't you?"

"Upon my life I do not!"

"How good! Why, I 'm Baby Blake."

"Baby Blake?" said I, thinking that a rather strange appellation for one whose well-developed proportions betokened nothing of infancy, — "Baby Blake?"

"To be sure; your cousin Baby."

"Indeed!" said I, springing forward. "Let me embrace my relative." Accepting my proffered salutation with the most exemplary coolness, she said: —

"Get a chair, now, and let 's have a talk together."

"Why the devil do they call you Baby?" said I, still puzzled by this palpable misnomer.

"Because I am the youngest, and I was always the baby," replied she, adjusting her ringlets with a most rural coquetry. "Now tell me something. Why do you live shut up here like a madman, and not come near us at Gurt-na-Morra?"

"Oh, that 's a long story, Baby. But, since we are asking questions, how did you get in here?"

"Just through the window, my dear; and I 've torn my habit, as you see."

So saying, she exhibited a rent of about two feet long, thrusting through it a very pretty foot and ankle at the same time.

"As my inhospitable customs have cost you a habit, you must let me make you a present of one."

"No, will you though? That 's a good fellow. Lord! I told them I knew you were n't a miser; that you were only odd, that 's all."

"And how did you come over, Baby?"

"Just cantered over with little Paddy Byrne. I made him take all the walls and ditches we met, and they 're scraping the mud off him ever since. I 'm glad I made you laugh, Charley; they say you are so sad. Dear me, how thirsty I am! Have you any beer?"

"To be sure, Baby. But would n't you like some luncheon?"

"Of all things. Well, this is fun!" said she, as taking my arm, I led her from the drawing-room. "They don't know where I 'm gone, — not one of them; and I 've a great mind not to tell them, if you would n't blab."

"Would it be quite proper?"

"Proper!" cried she, imitating my voice. "I like that! as if I was going to run away with you! Dear me, what a pretty house, and what nice pictures! Who is the old fellow up there in the armor?"

"That 's Sir Hildebrand O'Malley," said I, with some pride in recognizing an ancestor of the thirteenth century.

"And the other old fright with the wig, and his hands stuck in his pockets?"

"My grandfather, Baby."

"Lord, how ugly he is! Why, Charley, he has n't the look of you. One would think, too, he was angry at us. Ay, old gentleman, you don't like to see me leaning on Cousin Charley's arm! That must be the luncheon; I 'm sure I hear knives and forks rattling there."

The old butler's astonishment was not inferior to my own a few minutes before, when I entered the dining-room with my fair cousin upon my arm. As I drew a chair towards the table, a thought struck me that possibly it might only be a due attention to my fair guest if I invited the housekeeper, Mrs. Magra, to favor us with her presence; and accordingly, in an undertone, so as not to be overheard by old Simon, I said, —

"Perhaps, Baby, you 'd like to have Mrs. Magra to keep us company?"

"Who 's she?" was the brief answer.

"The housekeeper; a very respectable old matron."

"Is she funny?"

"Funny! not a bit."

"Oh, then, never mind her. What made you think of her?"

"Why, I thought, perhaps you 'd think — That is people might say — In fact I was doing a little bit proper on your account."

"Oh, that was it, was it? Thank you for nothing, my dear; Baby Blake can take care of herself. And now just help me to that wing there. Do you know, Cousin Charley, I think you 're an old quiz, and not half as good a fellow as you used to be?"

"Come, come, Baby, don't be in such a hurry to pronounce upon me. Let us take a glass of wine. Fill Miss Blake's glass, Simon."

"Well, you may be better when one comes to know you. I detest sherry. No, never mind, I 'll take it, as it 's here. Charley, I 'll not compliment you upon your ham; they don't know how to save them here. I 'll give you such a receipt when you come over to see us. But will you come? That 's the question."

"How can you ask me! Don't you think I 'll return your visit?"

"Oh, hang your ceremony! Come and see us, like a good-natured fellow that knew us since we played together and quarrelled over our toys on the grass. Is that your sword up there? Did you hear that noise? That was thunder: there it comes. Look at that!"

As she spoke, a darkness like night overspread the landscape; the waves of the river became greatly agitated, and the rain, descending in torrents, beat with tremendous force against the windows; clap after clap of thunder followed; the lightning flashed fearfully through the gloom; and the wind, growing every moment stronger, drove the rain with redoubled violence against the glass. For a while we amused ourselves with watching the effects of the storm without: the poor laborers flying from their work; the dripping figures seeking shelter beneath the trees; the barques; the very loaded carts themselves, — all interested Miss Baby, whose eye roved from the shore to the Shannon, recognizing with a practised eye every house upon its banks, and every barque that rocked and pitched beneath the gale.

"Well, this is pleasant to look out at," said she, at length, and after the storm had lasted for above an hour, without evincing any show of abatement; "but what 's to become of *me?*"

Now that was the very question I had been asking myself for the last twenty minutes without ever being able to find the answer.

"Eh, Charley, what 's to become of me?"

"Oh, never fear; one thing 's quite certain, you cannot leave this in such weather. The river is certainly impassable by this time at the ford, and to go by the road is out of the question; it is fully twelve miles. I have it, Baby; you, as I 've said before, can't leave this, but I can. Now, I 'll go over to Gurt-na-Morra, and return in the morning to bring you back; it will be fine by that time."

"Well, I like your notion. You 'll leave me all alone here to drink tea, I suppose, with your friend Mrs. Magra. A pleasant evening I 'd have of it; not a bit —"

"Well, Baby, don't be cross; I only meant this arrangement really for your sake. I need n't tell you how very much I 'd prefer doing the honors of my poor house in person."

"Oh, I see what you mean, — more propers. Well, well, I 've a great deal to learn; but look, I think its growing lighter."

"No, far from it; it 's only that gray mass along the horizon that always bodes continual rain."

As the prospect without had little cheering to look upon, we sat down beside the fire and chatted away, forgetting very soon in a hundred mutual recollections and inquiries, the rain and the wind, the thunder and the hurricane. Now and then, as some louder crash would resound above our heads, for a moment we would turn to the window, and comment upon the dreadful weather; but the next, we had forgotten all about it, and were deep in our confabulations.

As for my fair cousin, who at first was full of contrivances to pass the time, — such as the piano, a game at backgammon, chicken hazard, battledoor, — she at last became mightily interested in some of my soldiering adventures, and it was six o'clock ere we again thought that some final measure must be adopted for restoring Baby to her friends, or at least, guarding against the consequences her simple and guileless nature might have involved her in.

Mike was called into the conference, and at his suggestion, it was decided that we should have out the phaeton, and that I should myself drive Miss Blake home; a plan which offered no other difficulties than this one, — namely, that of above thirty horses in my stables, I had not a single pair which had ever been harnessed.

This, so far from proving the obstacle I deemed it, seemed, on the contrary, to overwhelm Baby with delight.

"Let's have them. Come, Charley, this will be rare fun; we could n't have a team of four, could we?"

"Six, if you like it, my dear coz — only who's to hold them? They're young thorough-breds, — most of them never backed; some not bitted. In fact, I know nothing of my stable. I say, Mike, is there anything fit to take out?"

"Yes, sir; there's Miss Wildespin, she's in training, to be sure; but we can't help that; and the brown colt they call, 'Billy the Bolter,' — they're the likeliest we have; without your honor would take the two chestnuts we took up last week; they're raal devils to go; and if the tackle will hold them, they'll bring you to Mr. Blake's door in forty minutes."

"I vote for the chestnuts," said Baby, slapping her boot with her horsewhip.

"I move an amendment in favor of Miss Wildespin," said I, doubtfully.

"He'll never do for Galway," sang Baby, laying her whip on my shoulder with no tender hand; "yet you used to cross the country in good style when you were here before."

"And might do so again, Baby."

"Ah, no; that vile dragoon seat, with your long stirrup, and your heel dropped, and your elbow this way, and your head that! How could you ever screw your horse up to his fence, lifting him along as you came up through the heavy ground, and with a stroke of your hand sending him pop over, with his hind-legs well under him?" Here she burst into a fit of laughter at my look of amazement, as with voice, gesture, and look she actually dramatized the scene she described.

By the time that I had costumed my fair friend in my dragoon cloak and a foraging cap, with a gold band around it, which was the extent of muffling my establishment could muster, a distant noise without apprised us that the phaeton was approaching. Certainly, the mode in which that equipage came up to the door might have inspired sentiments of fear in any heart less steeled against danger than my fair cousin's. The two blood chestnuts (for it was those Mike harnessed, having a groom's dislike to take a racer out of training) were surrounded by about twenty people: some at their heads; some patting them on the flanks; some spoking the wheels; and a few, the more cautious of the party, standing at a respectable distance and offering advice. The mode of progression was simply a spring, a plunge, a rear, a lounge, and a kick; and considering it was the first time they ever performed together, nothing could be more uniform than their display. Sometimes the pole would be seen to point straight upward, like a lightning conductor, while the infuriated animals appeared sparring with their fore-legs at an imaginary enemy. Sometimes, like the pictures in a school-book on mythology, they would seem in the act of diving, while with their hind-legs they dashed the splash-board into fragments behind them, — their eyes flashing fire, their nostrils distended, their flanks heaving, and every limb trembling with passion and excitement.

"That 's what I call a rare turn-out," said Baby, who enjoyed the proceeding amazingly.

"Yes; but remember," said I, "we 're not to have all these running footmen the whole way."

"I like that near-sider with the white fetlock."

"You 're right, Miss," said Mike, who entered at the moment, and felt quite gratified at the criticism, — "you 're right, Miss; it 's himself can do it."

"Come, Baby, are you ready?"

"All right, sir," said she, touching her cap knowingly with her forefinger.

"Will the tackle hold, Mike?" said I.

"We 'll take this with us, at any rate," pointing, as he spoke, to a considerable coil of rope, a hammer, and a basket of nails, he carried on his arm. "It 's the break harness we have, and it ought to be strong enough; but sure if the thunder comes on again, they 'd smash a chain cable."

"Now, Charley," cried Baby, "keep their heads straight; for when they go that way, they mean going."

"Well, Baby, let 's start; but pray remember one thing, — if I 'm not as agreeable on the journey as I ought to be, if I don't say as many pretty things to my pretty coz, it 's because these confounded beasts will give me as much as I can do."

"Oh, yes, look after the cattle, and take another time for squeezing my hand. I say, Charley, you 'd like to smoke, now, would n't you? If so, don't mind me."

"A thousand thanks for thinking of it; but I 'll not commit such a trespass on good breeding."

When we reached the door, the prospect looked dark and dismal enough. The rain had almost ceased, but masses of black clouds were hurrying across the sky, and the low rumbling noise of a gathering storm crept along the ground. Our panting equipage, with its two mounted grooms behind, — for to provide against all accident, Mike ordered two such to follow us, — stood in waiting. Miss Blake's horse, held by the smallest imaginable bit of boyhood, bringing up the rear.

"Look at Paddy Byrne's face," said Baby, directing my attention to the little individual in question.

Now, small as the aforesaid face was, it contrived, within its limits, to exhibit an expression of unqualified fear. I had no time, however, to give a second look, when I jumped into the phaeton and seized the reins. Mike sprang up behind at a look from me, and without speaking a word, the stablemen and helpers flew right and left. The chestnuts, seeing all free before them, made one tremendous plunge, carrying the fore-carriage clear off the ground, and straining every nut, bolt, screw, and strap about us with the effort.

"They 're off now," cried Mickey.

"Yes, they are off now," said Baby. "Keep them going."

Nothing could be easier to follow than this advice; and in fact so little merit had I in obeying it, that I never spoke a word. Down the avenue we went, at the speed of lightning, the stones and the water from the late rain flying and splashing about us. In one series of plunges, agreeably diversified by a strong bang upon the splashboard, we reached the gate. Before I had time to utter a prayer for our safety, we were through and fairly upon the high road.

"Musha, but the master 's mad!" cried the old dame of the gate-lodge; "he was n't out of this gate for a year and a half, and look now — "

The rest was lost in the clear ringing laugh of Baby, who clapped her hands in ecstasy and delight.

"What a spanking pair they are! I suppose you would n't let me get my hand on them?" said she, making a gesture as if to take the reins.

"Heaven forbid, my dear!" said I; "they 've nearly pulled my wrists off already."

Our road, like many in the west of Ireland, lay through a level tract of bog; deep ditches, half filled with water, on either side of us, but, fortunately, neither hill nor valley for several miles.

"There 's the mail," said Baby, pointing to a dark speck at a long distance off.

Ere many minutes elapsed, our stretching gallop, for such had our pace sobered into, brought us up with it, and as we flew by, at top speed, Baby jumped to her feet, and turning a waggish look at our beaten rivals, burst out into a fit of triumphant laughter.

Mike was correct as to time; in some few seconds less than forty minutes we turned into the avenue of Gurt-na-Morra. Tearing along like the very moment of their starting, the hot and fiery animals galloped up the approach, and at length came to a stop in a deep ploughed field, into which, fortunately for us, Mr. Blake, animated less by the picturesque than the profitable, had converted his green lawn. This check, however, was less owing to my agency than to that of my servants; for dismounting in haste, they flew to the horses' heads, and with ready tact, and before I had helped my cousin to the ground, succeeded in unharnessing them from the carriage, and led them, blown and panting, covered with foam, and splashed with mud, into the space before the door.

By this time we were joined by the whole Blake family, who poured forth in astonishment at our strange and sudden appearance. Explanation on my part was unnecessary, for Baby, with a volubility quite her own, gave the whole recital in less than three minutes. From the moment of her advent to her departure, they had it all; and while she mingled her ridicule at my surprise, her praise of my luncheon, her jests at my prudence, the whole family joined heartily in her mirth, while they welcomed, with most unequivocal warmth, my first visit to Gurt-na-Morra.

I confess it was with no slight gratification I remarked that Baby's visit was as much a matter of surprise to them as to me. Believing her to have gone to visit at Portumna Castle, they felt no uneasiness at her absence; so that, in her descent upon me, she was really only guided by her own wilful fancy, and that total absence of all consciousness of wrong which makes a truly innocent girl the hardiest of all God's creatures. I was reassured by this feeling, and satisfied that, whatever the intentions of the elder members of the Blake family, Baby was, at least, no participator in their plots or sharer in their intrigues.

CHAPTER XLVI.

NEW VIEWS.

When I found myself the next morning at home, I could not help ruminating over the strange adventures of the preceding day, and felt a kind of self-reproach at the frigid manner in which I had hitherto treated all the Blake advances, contrasting so ill for me with the unaffected warmth and kind good-nature of their reception. Never alluding, even by accident, to my late estrangement; never, by a chance speech, indicating that they felt any soreness for the past, — they talked away about the gossip of the country: its feuds, its dinners, its assizes, its balls, its garrisons, — all the varied subjects of country life were gayly and laughingly discussed; and when, as I entered my own silent and deserted home, and contrasted its look of melancholy and gloom with the gay and merry scene I so lately parted from, when my echoing steps reverberated along the flagged hall, — I thought of the happy family picture I left behind me, and could not help avowing to myself that the goods of fortune I possessed were but ill dispensed, when, in the midst of every means and appliance for comfort and happiness, I lived a solitary man, companionless and alone.

I arose from breakfast a hundred times, — now walking impatiently towards the window, now strolling into the drawing-room. Around, on every side, lay scattered the prints and drawings, as Baby had thrown them carelessly upon the floor; her handkerchief was also there. I took it up; I know not why, — some lurking leaven of old romance perhaps suggested it, — but I hoped it might prove of delicate texture, and bespeaking that lady-like coquetry which so pleasantly associates with the sex in our minds. Alas, no! Nothing could be more palpably the opposite: torn, and with a knot — some hint to memory — upon one corner, it was no aid to my careering fancy. And yet — and yet, what a handsome girl she is; how finely, how delicately formed that Greek outline of forehead and brow; how transparently soft that downy pink upon her cheek! With what varied expression those eyes can beam! — ay, that they can: but, confound it, there's this fault, their very archness, their sly malice, will be interpreted by the ill-judging world to any but the real motive. "How like a flirt!" will one say. "How impertinent! How ill-bred!" The conventional stare of cold, patched, and painted beauty, upon whose unblushing cheek no stray tinge of modesty has wandered, will be tolerated, even admired; while the artless beamings of the soul upon the face of rural loveliness will be condemned without appeal.

Such a girl may a man marry who destines his days to the wild west; but woe unto him! — woe unto him, should he migrate among the more civilized and less charitable *coteries* of our neighbors!

"Ah, here are the papers, and I was forgetting. Let me see — 'Bayonne' — ay, 'march of the troops — Sixth Corps.' What can that be without? I say, Mike, who is cantering along the avenue?"

"It's me, sir. I'm training the brown filly for Miss Mary, as your honor bid me last night."

"Ah, very true. Does she go quietly?"

"Like a lamb, sir; barrin' she does give a kick now and then at the sheet, when it bangs against her legs."

"Am I to go over with the books now, sir?" said a wild-looking shockhead appearing within the door.

"Yes, take them over, with my compliments; and say I hope Miss Mary Blake has caught no cold."

"You were speaking about a habit and hat, sir?" said Mrs. Magra, curtsying as she entered.

"Yes, Mrs. Magra; I want your advice. Oh, tell Barnes I really cannot be bored about those eternal turnips every day of my life. And, Mike, I wish you'd make them look over the four-horse harness. I want to try those grays; they tell me they'll run well together. Well, Freney, more complaints, I hope? Nothing but trespasses! I don't care, so you'd not worry me, if they eat up every blade of clover in the grounds; I'm sick of being bored this way. Did you say that we'd eight couple of good dogs? — quite enough to begin with. Tell Jones to ride into Banagher and look after that box; Buckmaster sent it from London two months ago, and it has been lying there ever since. And, Mrs. Magra, pray let the windows be opened, and the house well aired; that drawing-room would be all the better for new papering."

These few and broken directions may serve to show my readers — what certainly they failed to convince myself of — that a new chapter of my life had opened before me; and that, in proportion to the length of time my feelings had found neither vent nor outlet, they now rushed madly, tempestuously into their new channels, suffering no impediment to arrest, no obstacle to oppose their current.

Nothing can be conceived more opposite to my late, than my present habits now became. The house, the grounds, the gardens, all seemed to participate in the new influence which beamed upon myself; the stir and bustle of active life was everywhere perceptible; and amidst numerous preparations for the moors and the hunting-field, for pleasure parties upon the river, and fishing excursions up the mountains, my days were spent. The Blakes, without even for a moment pressing their attentions upon me, permitted me to go and come among them unquestioned and unasked. When, nearly every morning, I appeared in the breakfast-room, I felt exactly like a member of the family; the hundred little discrepancies of thought and habit which struck me forcibly at first, looked daily less apparent; the careless inattentions of my fair cousins as to dress, their free-and-easy boisterous manner, their very accents, which fell so harshly on my ear, gradually made less and less impression, until at last, when a raw English Ensign, just arrived in the neighborhood, remarked to me in confidence, "What devilish fine girls they were, if they were not so confoundedly Irish!" I could not help wondering what the fellow meant, and attributed the observation more to his ignorance than to its truth.

Papa and Mamma Blake, like prudent generals, so long as they saw the forces of the enemy daily wasting before them; so long as they could with impunity carry on the war at his expense, — resolved to risk nothing by a pitched battle. Unlike the Dalrymples, they could leave all to time.

Oh, tell me not of dark eyes swimming in their own ethereal essence; tell me not of pouting lips, of glossy ringlets, of taper fingers, and well-rounded insteps; speak not to me of soft voices, whose seductive sounds ring sweetly in our hearts; preach not of those thousand womanly graces so dear to every man, and doubly to him who lives apart from all their influences and their fascinations; neither dwell upon congenial temperament, similarity of taste, of disposition, and of thought; these are not the great risks a man runs in life. Of all the temptations, strong as these may be, there is one greater than them all, and that is, propinquity!

Show me the man who has ever stood this test; show me the man, deserving the name of such, who has become daily and hourly exposed to the breaching artillery of flashing eyes, of soft voices, of winning smiles, and kind speeches, and who has n't felt, and that too soon too, a breach within the rampart of his heart. He may, it is true, — nay, he will, in many cases, — make a bold and vigorous defence; sometimes will he re-intrench himself within the stockades of his prudence; but, alas! it is only to defer the moment when he must lay down his arms. He may, like a wise man who sees his fate inevitable, make a virtue of necessity, and surrender at discretion; or, like a crafty foe, seeing his doom before him, under the cover of the night he may make a sortie from the garrison, and run for his life. Ignominious as such a course must be, it is often the only one left.

But to come back. Love, like the small-pox, is most dangerous when you take it in the natural way. Those made matches, which Heaven is supposed to have a hand in, when placing an unmarried gentleman's property in the neighborhood of an unmarried lady's, which destine two people for each other in life, because their well-judging friends have agreed, "They 'll do very well; they were made for each other," — these are the mild cases of the malady. This process of friendly vaccination takes out the poison of the disease, substituting a more harmless and less exciting affection; but the really dangerous instances are those from contact, that same propinquity, that confounded tendency every man yields to, to fall into a railroad of habit; that is the risk, that is the danger. What a bore it is to find that the absence of one person, with whom you 're in no wise in love, will spoil your morning's canter, or your rowing party upon the river! How much put out are you, when she, to whom you always gave your arm in to dinner, does not make her appearance in the drawing-room; and your tea, too, some careless one, indifferent to your taste, puts a lump of sugar too little, or cream too much, while she — But no matter; habit has done for you what no direct influence of beauty could do, and a slave to your own selfish indulgences, and the cultivation of that ease you prize so highly, you fall over head and ears in love.

Now, you are not, my good reader, by any means to suppose that this was my case. No, no; I was too much what the world terms the "old soldier" for that. To continue my illustration: like the fortress that has been often besieged, the sentry upon the walls keeps more vigilant watch; his ear detects the far-off clank of the dread artillery; he marks each parallel; he notes down every breaching battery; and if he be captured, at least it is in fair fight.

Such were some of my reflections as I rode slowly home one evening from Gurt-na-Morra. Many a time, latterly, had I contrasted my own lonely and deserted hearth with the smiling looks, the happy faces, and the merry voices I had left behind me; and many a time did I ask myself, "Am I never to partake of a happiness like this?" How many a man is seduced into matrimony from this very feeling! How many a man whose hours have passed fleetingly at the pleasant tea-table, or by the warm hearth of some old country-house, going forth into the cold and cheerless night, reaches his far-off home only to find it dark and gloomy, joyless and companionless? How often has the hard-visaged look of his old butler, as, with sleepy eyes and yawning face, he hands a bed-room candle, suggested thoughts of married happiness? Of the perils of propinquity I have already spoken; the risks of contrast are also great. Have you never, in strolling through some fragrant and rich conservatory, fixed your eye upon a fair and lovely flower, whose blossoming beauty seems to give all the lustre and all the incense of the scene around? And how have you thought it would adorn and grace the precincts of your home, diffusing fragrance on every side. Alas, the experiment is not always successful. Much of the charm and many of the fascinations which delight you are the result of association of time and of place. The lovely voice, whose tones have spoken to your heart, may, like some instrument, be delightful in the harmony of the orchestra, but, after all, prove a very middling performer in a duet.

I say not this to deter men from matrimony, but to warn them from a miscalculation which may mar their happiness. Flirtation is a very fine thing, but it 's only a state of transition after all. The tadpole existence of the lover would be great fun, if one was never to become a frog under the hands of the parson. I say all this dispassionately and advisedly. Like the poet of my country, for many years of my life, —

"My only books were woman's looks,"

and certainly I subscribe to a circulating library.

All this long digression may perhaps bring the reader to where it brought me, — the very palpable conviction, that, though not in love with my cousin Baby, I could not tell when I might eventually become so.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A RECOGNITION.

THE most pleasing part about retrospect is the memory of our bygone hopes. The past, however happy, however blissful, few would wish to live over again; but who is there that does not long for, does not pine after the day-dream which gilded the future, which looked ever forward to the time to come as to a realization of all that was dear to us, lightening our present cares, soothing our passing sorrows by that one thought?

Life is marked out in periods in which, like stages in a journey, we rest and repose ourselves, casting a look, now back upon the road we have been travelling, now throwing a keener glance towards the path left us. It is at such spots as these remembrance comes full upon us, and that we feel how little our intentions have swayed our career or influenced our actions; the aspirations, the resolves of youth, are either looked upon as puerile follies, or a most distant day settled on for their realization. The principles we fondly looked to, like our guide-stars, are dimly visible, not seen; the friends we cherished are changed and gone; the scenes themselves seem no longer the sunshine and the shade we loved; and, in fact, we are living in a new world, where our own altered condition gives the type to all around us; the only link that binds us to the past being that same memory that like a sad curfew tolls the twilight of our fairest dreams and most cherished wishes.

That these glimpses of the bygone season of our youth should be but fitful and passing — tinging, not coloring the landscape of our life — we should be engaged in all the active bustle and turmoil of the world, surrounded by objects of hope, love, and ambition, stemming the strong tide in whose fountain is fortune.

He, however, who lives apart, a dreary and a passionless existence, will find that in the past, more than in the future, his thoughts have found their resting-place; memory usurps the place of hope, and he travels through life like one walking onward; his eyes still turning towards some loved forsaken spot, teeming with all the associations of his happiest hours, and preserving, even in distance, the outline that he loved.

Distance in time, as in space, smooths down all the inequalities of surface; and as the cragged and rugged mountain, darkened by cliff and precipice, shows to the far-off traveller but some blue and misty mass, so the long-lost-sight-of hours lose all the cares and griefs that tinged them, and to our mental eye, are but objects of uniform loveliness and beauty; and if we do not think of

"The smiles, the tears,
Of boyhood's years,"

it is because, like April showers, they but checker the spring of our existence.

For myself, baffled in hope at a period when most men but begin to feel it, I thought myself much older than I really was; the disappointments of the world, like the storms of the ocean, impart a false sense of experience to the young heart, as he sails forth upon his voyage; and it is an easy error to mistake trials for time.

The goods of fortune by which I was surrounded, took nothing from the bitterness of my retrospect; on the contrary, I could not help feeling that every luxury of my life was bought by my surrender of that career which had elated me in my own esteem, and which, setting a high and noble ambition before me, taught me to be a man.

To be happy, one must not only fulfil the duties and exactions of his station, but the station itself must answer to his views and aspirations in life. Now, mine did not sustain this condition: all that my life had of promise was connected with the memory of her who never could share my fortunes; of her for whom I had earned praise and honor; becoming ambitious as the road to her affection, only to learn after, that my hopes were but a dream, and my paradise a wilderness.

While thus the inglorious current of my life ran on, I was not indifferent to the mighty events the great continent of Europe was witnessing. The successes of the Peninsular campaign; the triumphant entry of the British into France; the downfall of Napoleon; the restoration of the Bourbons, — followed each other with the rapidity of the most common-place occurrences; and in the few short years in which I had sprung from boyhood to man's estate, the whole condition of the world was altered. Kings deposed; great armies disbanded; rightful sovereigns restored to their dominions; banished and exiled men returned to their country, invested with rank and riches; and peace, in the fullest tide of its blessings, poured down upon the earth devastated and blood-stained.

Years passed on; and between the careless abandonment to the mere amusement of the hour, and the darker meditation upon the past, time slipped away. From my old friends and brother officers I heard but rarely. Power, who at first wrote frequently, grew gradually less and less communicative. Webber, who had gone to Paris at the peace, had written but one letter; while, from the rest, a few straggling lines were all I received. In truth be it told, my own negligence and inability to reply cost me this apparent neglect.

It was a fine evening in May, when, rigging up a spritsail, I jumped into my yawl, and dropped easily down the river.. The light wind gently curled the crested water, the trees waved gently and shook their branches in the breeze, and my little barque, bending slightly beneath, rustled on her foamy track with that joyous bounding motion so inspiriting to one's heart. The clouds were flying swiftly past, tinging with their shadows the mountains beneath; the Munster shore, glowing with a rich sunlight, showed every sheep-cot and every hedge-row clearly out, while the deep shadow of tall Scariff darkened the silent river where Holy Island, with its ruined churches and melancholy tower, was reflected in the still water.

It was a thoroughly Irish landscape: the changeful sky;

the fast-flitting shadows; the brilliant sunlight; the plenteous fields; the broad and swelling stream; the dark mountain, from whose brown crest a wreath of thin blue smoke was rising,—were all there smiling yet sadly, like her own sons, across whose lowering brow some fitful flash of fancy ever playing dallies like sunbeams on a darkening stream, nor marks the depth that lies below.

I sat musing over the strange harmony of Nature with the temperament of man, every phase of his passionate existence seeming to have its type in things inanimate, when a loud cheer from the land aroused me, and the words, "Charley! Cousin Charley!" came wafted over the water to where I lay.

For some time I could but distinguish the faint outline of some figures on the shore; but as I came nearer, I recognized my fair cousin Baby, who, with a younger brother of some eight or nine years old, was taking an evening walk.

"Do you know, Charley," said she, "the boys have gone over to the castle to look for you; we want you particularly this evening."

"Indeed, Cousin Baby! Well, I fear you must make my excuses."

"Then, once for all, I will not. I know this is one of your sulky moods, and I tell you frankly I'll not put up with them any more."

"No, no, Baby, not so; out of spirits if you will, but not out of temper."

"The distinction is much too fine for me, if there be any. But there now, do be a good fellow; come up with us — come up with *me!*"

As she said this she placed her arm within mine. I thought, too, — perhaps it was but a thought, — she pressed me gently. I know she blushed and turned away her head to hide it.

"I don't pretend to be proof to your entreaty, Cousin Baby," said I, with half-affected gallantry, putting her fingers to my lips.

"There, how can you be so foolish; look at William yonder; I am sure he must have seen you!" But William, God bless him! was bird's-nesting or butterfly-hunting or daisy-picking or something of that kind.

O ye young brothers, who, sufficiently old to be deemed companions and *chaperons*, but yet young enough to be regarded as having neither eyes nor ears, what mischief have ye to answer for; what a long reckoning of tender speeches, of soft looks, of pressed hands, lies at your door! What an incentive to flirtation is the wily imp who turns ever and anon from his careless gambols to throw his laughter-loving eyes upon you, calling up the mantling blush to both your cheeks! He seems to chronicle the hours of your dalliance, making your secrets known unto each other. We have gone through our share of flirtation in this life: match-making mothers, prying aunts, choleric uncles, benevolent and open-hearted fathers, we understand to the life, and care no more for such man-traps than a Melton man, well mounted on his strong-boned thorough-bred, does for a four-barred ox-fence that lies before him. Like him, we take them flying; never relaxing the slapping stride of our loose gallop, we go straight ahead, never turning aside, except for a laugh at those who flounder in the swamps we sneer at. But we confess honestly, we fear the little brother, the small urchin who, with nankeen trousers and three rows of buttons, performs the part of Cupid. He strikes real terror into our heart; he it is who, with a cunning wink or sly smile, seems to confirm the soft nonsense we are weaving; by some slight gesture he seems to check off the long reckoning of our attentions, bringing us every moment nearer to the time when the score must be settled and the debt paid. He it is who, by a memory delightfully oblivious of his task and his table-book, is tenacious to the life of what you said to Fanny; how you put your head under Lucy's bonnet; he can imitate to perfection the way you kneeled upon the grass; and the wretch has learned to smack his lips like a *gourmand,* that he may convey another stage of your proceeding.

Oh, for infant schools for everything under the age of ten! Oh, for factories for the children of the rich! The age of prying curiosity is from four-and-a-half to nine, and Fouché himself might get a lesson in *police* from an urchin in his alphabet.

I contrived soon, however, to forget the presence of even the little brother. The night was falling; Baby appeared getting fatigued with her walk, for she leaned somewhat more heavily upon my arm, and I — I cannot tell wherefore — fell into that train of thinking aloud, which somehow, upon a summer's eve, with a fair girl beside one, is the very nearest thing to love-making.

"There, Charley, don't now — ah, don't! Do let go my hand; they are coming down the avenue."

I had scarcely time to obey the injunction, when Mr. Blake called out: —

"Well, indeed! Charley, this is really fortunate; we have got a friend to take tea with us, and wanted you to meet him."

Muttering an internal prayer for something not exactly the welfare of the aforesaid friend, whom I judged to be some Galway squire, I professed aloud the pleasure I felt in having come in so opportunely.

"He wishes particularly to make your acquaintance."

"So much the worse," thought I to myself; "it rarely happens that this feeling is mutual."

Evidently provoked at the little curiosity I exhibited, Blake added, —

"He 's on his way to Fermoy with a detachment."

"Indeed! what regiment, pray?"

"The 28th Foot."

"Ah, I don't know them."

By this time we reached the steps of the hall-door, and just as we did so, the door opened suddenly, and a tall figure in uniform presented himself. With one spring he seized my hand and nearly wrung it off.

"Why what," said I, "can this be? Is it really — "

"Sparks," said he, — "your old friend Sparks, my boy; I 've changed into the infantry, and here I am. Heard by chance you were in the neighborhood; met Mr. Blake, your friend here, at the inn, and accepted his invitation to meet you."

Poor Sparks, albeit the difference in his costume, was the same as ever. Having left the Fourteenth soon after I quitted them, he knew but little of their fortunes; and he himself had been on recruiting stations nearly the whole time since we had met before.

While we each continued to extol the good fortune of the other, — he mine as being no longer in the service, and I his for still being so, — we learned the various changes which had happened to each of us during our separation. Although his destination was ultimately Fermoy, Portumna was ordered to be his present quarter; and I felt delighted to have once more an old companion within reach, to chat over former days of campaigning and nights of merriment in the Peninsula.

Sparks soon became a constant visitor and guest at Gurtna-Morra; his good temper, his easy habits, his simplicity of character, rapidly enabled him to fall into all their ways; and although evidently not what Baby would call "the man for Galway," he endeavored with all his might to please every one, and certainly succeeded to a considerable extent.

Baby alone seemed to take pleasure in tormenting the poor sub. Long before she met with him having heard much from me of his exploits abroad, she was continually bringing up some anecdote of his unhappy loves or misplaced passions; which he evidently smarted under the more, from the circumstance that he appeared rather inclined to like my fair cousin.

As she continued this for some time, I remarked that Sparks, who at first was all gayety and high spirits, grew gradually more depressed and dispirited. I became convinced that the poor fellow was in love; very little management on my part was necessary to obtain his confession; and accordingly, the same evening the thought first struck me, as we were riding slowly home towards O'Malley Castle, I touched at first generally upon the merits of the Blakes, their hospitality, etc., then diverged to the accomplishments and perfections of the girls, and lastly, Baby herself, in all form, came up for sentence.

"Ah, yes!" said Sparks, with a deep sigh, "it is quite as you say; she is a lovely girl; and that liveliness in her character, that elasticity in her temperament, chastened down as it might be by the feeling of respect for the man she loved! I say, Charley, is it a very long attachment of yours?"

"A long attachment of mine! Why, my dear Sparks, you can't suppose that there is anything between us! I pledge you my word most faithfully."

"Oh, no, don't tell me that; what good can there be in mystifying me?"

"I have no such intention, believe me. My cousin Baby, however I like and admire her, has no other place in my affection than a very charming girl who has lightened a great many dreary and tiresome hours, and made my banishment from the world less irksome than I should have found it without her."

"And you are really not in love?"

"Not a bit of it!"

"Nor going to marry her either?"

"Not the least notion of it! — a fact. Baby and I are excellent friends, for the very reason that we were never lovers; we have had no *petits jeux* of fallings out and makings up; no hide-and-seek trials of affected indifference and real disappointments; no secrets, no griefs, nor grudges; neither quarrels nor keepsakes. In fact, we are capital cousins; quizzing every one for our own amusement; riding, walking, boating together; in fact, doing and thinking of everything save sighs and declarations; always happy to meet, and never broken-hearted when we parted. And I can only add, as a proof of my sincerity, that if you feel as I suspect you do from your questions, I 'll be your ambassador to the court of Gurt-na-Morra with sincere pleasure."

"Will you really? Will you, indeed, Charley, do this for me? Will you strengthen my wishes by your aid, and give me all your influence with the family?"

I could scarcely help smiling at poor Sparks's eagerness, or the unwarrantable value he put upon my alliance, in a case where his own unassisted efforts did not threaten much failure.

"I repeat it, Sparks, I 'll make a proposal for you in all form, aided and abetted by everything recommendatory and laudatory I can think of; I 'll talk of you as a Peninsular of no small note and promise; and observe rigid silence about your Welsh flirtation and your Spanish elopement."

"You 'll not blab about the Dalrymples, I hope?"

"Trust me; I only hope you will be always equally discreet: but now — when shall it be? Should you like to consider the matter more?"

"Oh, no, nothing of the kind; let it be to-morrow, at once, if I am to fail; even that — anything 's better than suspense."

"Well, then, to-morrow be it," said I.

So I wished him a good-night, and a stout heart to hear his fortune withal.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A MISTAKE.

I ORDERED my horses at an early hour; and long before Sparks — lover that he was — had opened his eyes to the light, was already on my way towards Gurt-na-Morra. Several miles slipped away before I well determined how I should open my negotiations: whether to papa Blake, in the first instance, or to madame, to whose peculiar province these secrets of the home department belonged; or why not at once to Baby?—because, after all, with her it rested finally to accept or refuse. To address myself to the heads of the department seemed the more formal course; and as I was acting entirely as an "envoy extraordinary," I deemed this the fitting mode of proceeding.

It was exactly eight o'clock as I drove up to the door. Mr. Blake was standing at the open window of the breakfast-room, sniffing the fresh air of the morning. The Blake mother was busily engaged with the economy of the tea-table; a very simple style of morning costume, and a night-cap with a flounce like a petticoat, marking her unaffected toilet. Above stairs, more than one head *en papillote* took a furtive peep between the curtains; and the butler of the family, in corduroys and a fur cap, was weeding turnips in the lawn before the door.

Mrs. Blake had barely time to take a hurried departure, when her husband came out upon the steps to bid me welcome. There is no physiognomist like your father of a family, or your mother with marriageable daughters. Lavater was nothing to them, in reading the secret springs of action, the hidden sources of all character. Had there been a good respectable bump allotted by Spurzheim to "honorable intentions," the matter had been all fair and easy, — the very first salute of the gentleman would have pronounced upon his views. But, alas! no such guide is forthcoming; and the science, as it now exists, is enveloped in doubt and difficulty. The gay, laughing temperament of some, the dark and serious composure of others; the cautious and reserved, the open and the candid, the witty, the sententious, the clever, the dull, the prudent, the reckless, — in a word, every variety which the innumerable hues of character imprint upon the human face divine are their study. Their convictions are the slow and patient fruits of intense observation and great logical accuracy. Carefully noting down every lineament and feature, — their change, their action, and their developement, — they track a lurking motive with the scent of a bloodhound, and run down a growing passion with an unrelenting speed. I have been in the witness-box, exposed to the licensed badgering and privileged impertinence of a lawyer, winked, leered, frowned, and sneered at with all the long-practised tact of a *nisi prius* torturer; I have stood before the cold, fish-like, but searching eye of a prefect of police, as he compared my passport with my person, and thought he could detect a discrepancy in both, — but I never felt the same sense of total exposure as when glanced at by the half-cautious, half-prying look of a worthy father or mother, in a family where there are daughters to marry, and "nobody coming to woo."

"You 're early, Charley," said Mr. Blake, with an affected mixture of carelessness and warmth. "You have not had breakfast?"

"No, sir. I have come to claim a part of yours; and if I mistake not, you seem a little later than usual."

"Not more than a few minutes. The girls will be down presently; they 're early risers, Charley; good habits are just as easy as bad ones; and, the Lord be praised! my girls were never brought up with any other."

"I am well aware of it, sir; and indeed, if I may be permitted to take advantage of the *apropos*, it was on the subject of one of your daughters that I wished to speak to you this morning, and which brought me over at this uncivilized hour, hoping to find you alone."

Mr. Blake's look for a moment was one of triumphant satisfaction; it was but a glance, however, and repressed the very instant after, as he said, with a well got-up indifference, —

"Just step with me into the study, and we 're sure not to be interrupted."

Now, although I have little time or space for such dallying, I cannot help dwelling for a moment upon the aspect of what Mr. Blake dignified with the name of his study. It was a small apartment with one window, the panes of which, independent of all aid from a curtain, tempered the daylight through the medium of cobwebs, dust, and the ill-trained branches of some wall-tree without.

Three oak chairs and a small table were the only articles of furniture, while around, on all sides, lay the *disjecta membra* of Mr. Blake's hunting, fishing, shooting, and coursing equipments, — old top-boots, driving whips, odd spurs, a racing saddle, a blunderbuss, the helmet of the Galway Light Horse, a salmon net, a large map of the county with a marginal index to several mortgages marked with a cross, a stable lantern, the rudder of a boat, and several other articles representative of his daily associations; but not one book, save an odd volume of Watty Cox's Magazine, whose pages seemed as much the receptacle of brown hackles for trout-fishing as the resource of literary leisure.

"Here we 'll be quite cosey, and to ourselves," said Mr. Blake, as, placing a chair for me, he sat down himself, with the air of a man resolved to assist, by advice and counsel, the dilemma of some dear friend.

After a few preliminary observations, which, like a breathing canter before a race, serves to get your courage up, and settle you well in your seat, I opened my negotiation by some very broad and sweeping truisms about the misfortunes of a bachelor existence, the discomforts of his position, his want of home and happiness, the necessity for his one day thinking seriously about marriage; it being in a measure almost as inevitable a termination of the free-and-easy career of his single life as transportation for seven years is to that of a poacher. "You cannot go on, sir," said I, "trespassing forever upon your neighbors' preserves; you must be apprehended sooner or later; therefore, I think, the better way is to take out a license."

Never was a small sally of wit more thoroughly successful. Mr. Blake laughed till he cried, and when he had done, wiped his eyes with a snuffy handkerchief, and cried till he laughed again. As, somehow, I could not conceal from myself a suspicion as to the sincerity of my friend's mirth, I merely consoled myself with the French adage, that "he laughs best who laughs last;" and went on: —

"It will not be deemed surprising, sir, that a man should come to the discovery I have just mentioned much more rapidly by having enjoyed the pleasure of intimacy with your family; not only by the example of perfect domestic happiness presented to him, but by the prospect held out that a heritage of the fair gifts which adorn and grace a married life may reasonably be looked for among the daughters of those themselves the realization of conjugal felicity."

Here was a canter, with a vengeance; and as I felt blown, I slackened my pace, coughed, and resumed: —

"Miss Mary Blake, sir, is, then, the object of my present communication; she it is who has made an existence that seemed fair and pleasurable before, appear blank and unprofitable without her. I have, therefore, to come at once to the point, visited you this morning, formally to ask her hand in marriage; her fortune, I may observe at once, is perfectly immaterial, a matter of no consequence [so Mr. Blake thought also]; a competence fully equal to every reasonable notion of expenditure —"

"There, there; don't, don't!" said Mr. Blake, wiping his eyes, with a sob like a hiccough, — "don't speak of money! I know what you would say, a handsome settlement, — a well-secured jointure, and all that. Yes, yes, I feel it all."

"Why, yes, sir, I believe I may add that everything in this respect will answer your expectations."

"Of course; to be sure. My poor dear Baby! How to do without her, that's the rub! You don't know, O'Malley, what that girl is to me — you can't know it; you'll feel it one day though — that you will!"

"The devil I shall!" said I to myself. "The great point is, after all, to learn the young lady's disposition in the matter —"

"Ah, Charley, none of this with me, you sly dog! You think I don't know you. Why, I've been watching, — that is, I have seen — no, I mean I've heard — They — they, — people will talk, you know."

"Very true, sir. But, as I was going to remark — "

Just at this moment the door opened, and Miss Baby herself, looking most annoyingly handsome, put in her head.

"Papa, we're waiting breakfast. Ah, Charley, how d'ye do?"

"Come in, Baby," said Mr. Blake; "you have n't given me my kiss this morning."

The lovely girl threw her arms around his neck, while her bright and flowing locks fell richly upon his shoulder. I turned rather sulkily away; the thing always provokes me. There is as much cold, selfish cruelty in such *coram publico* endearments, as in the luscious display of rich rounds and sirloins in a chop-house to the eyes of the starved and penniless wretch without, who, with dripping rags and watering lip, eats imaginary slices, while the pains of hunger are torturing him!

"There's Tim!" said Mr. Blake, suddenly. "Tim Cronin! — Tim!" shouted he to, as it seemed to me, an imaginary individual outside; while, in the eagerness of pursuit, he rushed out of the study, banging the door as he went, and leaving Baby and myself to our mutual edification.

I should have preferred it being otherwise; but as the Fates willed it thus, I took Baby's hand, and led her to the window. Now, there is one feature of my countrymen which, having recognized strongly in myself, I would fain proclaim; and writing as I do — however little people may suspect me — solely for the sake of a moral, would gladly warn the unsuspecting against. I mean, a very decided tendency to become the consoler, the confidant of young ladies; seeking out opportunities of assuaging their sorrow, reconciling their afflictions, breaking eventful passages to their ears; not from any inherent pleasure in the tragic phases of the intercourse, but for the semi-tenderness of manner, that harmless hand-squeezing, that innocent waist-pressing, without which consolation is but like salmon without lobster, — a thing maimed, wanting, and imperfect.

Now, whether this with me was a natural gift, or merely a "way we have in the army," as the song says, I shall not pretend to say; but I venture to affirm that few men could excel me in the practice I speak of some five-and-twenty years ago. Fair reader, do pray, if I have the happiness of being known to you, deduct them from my age before you subtract from my merits.

"Well, Baby, dear, I have just been speaking about you to papa. Yes, dear — don't look so incredulous — even of your own sweet self. Well, do you know, I almost prefer your hair worn that way; those same silky masses look better falling thus heavily — "

"There, now, Charley! ah, don't!"

"Well, Baby, as I was saying, before you stopped me, I have been asking your papa a very important question, and he has referred me to you for the answer. And now will you tell me, in all frankness and honesty, your mind on the matter?"

She grew deadly pale as I spoke these words, then suddenly flushed up again, but said not a word. I could perceive, however, from her heaving chest and restless manner, that no common agitation was stirring her bosom. It was cruelty to be silent, so I continued: —

"One who loves you well, Baby, dear, has asked his own heart the question, and learned that without you he has no chance of happiness; that your bright eyes are to him bluer than the deep sky above him; that your soft voice, your winning smile — and what a smile it is! — have taught him that he loves, nay, adores you! Then, dearest — what pretty fingers those are! Ah, what is this? Whence came that emerald? I never saw that ring before, Baby!"

"Oh, that," said she, blushing deeply, — "that is a ring the foolish creature Sparks gave me a couple of days ago; but I don't like it — I don't intend to keep it."

So saying, she endeavored to draw it from her finger, but in vain.

"But why, Baby, why take it off? Is it to give him the pleasure of putting it on again? There, don't look angry; we must not fall out, surely."

"No, Charley, if you are not vexed with me — if you are not — "

"No, no, my dear Baby; nothing of the kind. Sparks was quite right in not trusting his entire fortune to my diplomacy; but at least, he ought to have told me that he had opened the negotiation. Now, the question simply is: Do you love him? or rather, because that shortens matters: Will you accept him?"

"Love who?"

"Love whom? Why Sparks, to be sure!"

A flash of indignant surprise passed across her features, now pale as marble; her lips were slightly parted, her large full eyes were fixed upon me steadfastly, and her hand, which I had held in mine, she suddenly withdrew from my grasp.

"And so — and so it is of Mr. Sparks's cause you are so ardently the advocate?" she said at length, after a pause of most awkward duration.

"Why, of course, my dear cousin. It was at his suit and solicitation I called on your father; it was he himself who entreated me to take this step; it was he —"

But before I could conclude, she burst into a torrent of tears and rushed from the room.

Here was a situation! What the deuce was the matter? Did she, or did she not, care for him? Was her pride or her delicacy hurt at my being made the means of the communication to her father? What had Sparks done or said to put himself and me in such a devil of a predicament? Could she care for any one else?

"Well, Charley!" cried Mr. Blake, as he entered, rubbing his hands in a perfect paroxysm of good temper, — "well, Charley, has love-making driven breakfast out of your head?"

"Why, faith, sir, I greatly fear I have blundered my mission sadly. My cousin Mary does not appear so perfectly satisfied; her manner —"

"Don't tell me such nonsense. The girl's manner! Why, man, I thought you were too old a soldier to be taken in that way."

"Well, then, sir, the best thing, under the circumstances, is to send over Sparks himself. Your consent, I may tell him, is already obtained."

"Yes, my boy; and my daughter's is equally sure. But

I don't see what we want with Sparks at all. Among old friends and relatives as we are, there is, I think, no need of a stranger."

"A stranger! Very true, sir, he is a stranger; but when that stranger is about to become your son-in-law — "

"About to become what?" said Mr. Blake, rubbing his spectacles, and placing them leisurely on his nose to regard me, — "to become what?"

"Your son-in-law. I hope I have been sufficiently explicit, sir, in making known Mr. Sparks's wishes to you."

"Mr. Sparks! Why damn me, sir — that is — I beg pardon for the warmth — you — you never mentioned his name to-day till now. You led me to suppose that — in fact, you told me most clearly — "

Here, from the united effects of rage and a struggle for concealment, Mr. Blake was unable to proceed, and walked the room with a melodramatic stamp perfectly awful.

"Really, sir," said I at last, "while I deeply regret any misconception or mistake I have been the cause of, I must, in justice to myself, say that I am perfectly unconscious of having misled you. I came here this morning with a proposition for the hand of your daughter in behalf of — "

"Yourself, sir. Yes, yourself. I'll be — no! I'll not swear; but — but just answer me, if you ever mentioned one word of Mr. Sparks, if you ever alluded to him till the last few minutes?"

I was perfectly astounded. It might be, alas, it was exactly as he stated! In my unlucky effort at extreme delicacy, I became only so very mysterious that I left the matter open for them to suppose that it might be the Khan of Tartary was in love with Baby.

There was but one course now open. I most humbly apologized for my blunder; repeated by every expression I could summon up, my sorrow for what had happened; and was beginning a renewal of negotiation "*in re* Sparks," when, overcome by his passion, Mr. Blake could hear no more, but snatched up his hat and left the room.

Had it not been for Baby's share in the transaction I should have laughed outright. As it was, I felt anything but mirthful; and the only clear and collected idea in my mind was to hurry home with all speed, and fasten a quarrel on Sparks, the innocent cause of the whole mishap. Why this thought struck me let physiologists decide.

A few moments' reflection satisfied me that under present circumstances, it would be particularly awkward to meet with any others of the family. Ardently desiring to secure my retreat, I succeeded, after some little time, in opening the window-sash; consoling myself for any injury I was about to inflict upon Mr. Blake's young plantation in my descent, by the thought of the service I was rendering him while admitting a little fresh air into his sanctum.

For my patriotism's sake I will not record my sensations as I took my way through the shrubbery towards the stable. Men are ever so prone to revenge their faults and their follies upon such inoffensive agencies as time and place, wind or weather, that I was quite convinced that to any other but Galway ears my *exposé* would have been perfectly clear and intelligible; and that in no other country under heaven would a man be expected to marry a young lady from a blunder in his grammar.

"Baby may be quite right," thought I; "but one thing is assuredly true, — if I'll never do for Galway, Galway will never do for me. No, hang it! I have endured enough for above two years. I have lived in banishment, away from society, supposing that, at least, if I isolated myself from the pleasures of the world I was exempt from its annoyances." But no; in the seclusion of my remote abode troubles found their entrance as easily as elsewhere, so that I determined at once to leave home; wherefor, I knew not. If life had few charms, it had still fewer ties for me. If I was not bound by the bonds of kindred, I was untrammelled by their restraints.

The resolution once taken, I burned to put it into effect; and so impatiently did I press forward as to call forth more than one remonstrance on the part of Mike at the pace we were proceeding. As I neared home, the shrill but stirring sounds of drum and fife met me; and shortly after a crowd of country people filled the road. Supposing it some mere recruiting party, I was endeavoring to press on, when the sounds of a full military band, in the exhilarating measure of a quick-step, convinced me of my error; and as I drew to one side of the road, the advanced guard of an infantry regiment came forward. The men's faces were flushed, their uniforms dusty and travel-stained, their knapsacks strapped firmly on, and their gait the steady tramp of the march. Saluting the subaltern, I asked if anything of consequence had occurred in the south that the troops were so suddenly under orders. The officer stared at me for a moment or two without speaking, and while a slight smile half-curled his lip, answered: —

"Apparently, sir, you seem very indifferent to military news, otherwise you can scarcely be ignorant of the cause of our route."

"On the contrary," said I, "I am, though a young man, an old soldier, and feel most anxious about everything connected with the service."

"Then it is very strange, sir, you should not have heard the news. Bonaparte has returned from Elba, has arrived at Paris, been received with the most overwhelming enthusiasm, and at this moment the preparations for war are resounding from Venice to the Vistula. All our forces, disposable, are on the march for embarkation. Lord Wellington has taken the command, and already, I may say, the campaign has begun."

The tone of enthusiasm in which the young officer spoke, the astounding intelligence itself, contrasting with the apathetic indolence of my own life, made me blush deeply, as I muttered some miserable apology for my ignorance.

"And you are now *en route?*"

"For Fermoy; from which we march to Cove for embarkation. The first battalion of our regiment sailed for the West Indies a week since, but a frigate has been sent after them to bring them back; and we hope all to meet in the Netherlands before the month is over. But I must beg your pardon for saying adieu. Good-by, sir."

"Good-by, sir; good-by," said I, as still standing in the road, I was so overwhelmed with surprise that I could scarcely credit my senses.

A little farther on, I came up with the main body of the regiment, from whom I learned the corroboration of the news, and also the additional intelligence that Sparks had been ordered off with his detachment early in the morning, a veteran battalion being sent into garrison in the various towns of the south and west.

"Do you happen to know a Mr. O'Malley, sir?" said the major, coming up with a note in his hand.

"I beg to present him to you," said I, bowing.

"Well, sir, Sparks gave me this note, which he wrote with a pencil as we crossed each other on the road this morning. He told me you were an old Fourteenth man. But your regiment is in India, I believe; at least Power said they were under orders when we met him."

"Fred Power! Are you acquainted with him? Where is he now, pray?"

"Fred is on the staff with General Vandeleur, and is now in Belgium."

"Indeed!" said I, every moment increasing my surprise at some new piece of intelligence. "And the Eighty-eighth?" said I, recurring to my old friends in that regiment.

"Oh, the Eighty-eighth are at Gibraltar, or somewhere in the Mediterranean; at least, I know they are not near enough to open the present campaign with us. But if you 'd like to hear any more news, you must come over to Borrisokane; we stop there to-night."

"Then I 'll certainly do so."

"Come at six then, and dine with us."

"Agreed," said I; "and now, good-morning."

So saying, I once more drove on; my head full of all that I had been hearing, and my heart bursting with eagerness to join the gallant fellows now bound for the campaign.

CHAPTER XLIX.

BRUSSELS.

I must not protract a tale already far too long, by the recital of my acquaintance with the gallant Twenty-sixth. It is sufficient that I should say that, having given Mike orders to follow me to Cove, I joined the regiment on their march, and accompanied them to Cork. Every hour of each day brought us in news of moment and importance; and amidst all the stirring preparations for the war, the account of the splendid spectacle of the *Champ de Mai* burst upon astonished Europe, and the intelligence spread far and near that the enthusiasm of France never rose higher in favor of the Emperor. And while the whole world prepared for the deadly combat, Napoleon surpassed even himself, by the magnificent conceptions for the coming conflict, and the stupendous nature of those plans by which he resolved on resisting combined and united Europe.

While our admiration and wonder of the mighty spirit that ruled the destinies of the continent rose high, so did our own ardent and burning desire for the day when the open field of fight should place us once more in front of each other.

Every hard-fought engagement of the Spanish war was thought of and talked over; from Talavera to Toulouse, all was remembered. And while among the old Peninsulars the military ardor was so universally displayed, among the regiments who had not shared the glories of Spain and Portugal, an equal, perhaps a greater, impulse was created for the approaching campaign.

When we arrived at Cork, the scene of bustle and excitement exceeded anything I ever witnessed. Troops were mustering in every quarter; regiments arriving and embarking; fresh bodies of men pouring in; drills, parades, and inspections going forward; arms, ammunition, and military stores distributing; and amidst all, a spirit of burning enthusiasm animated every rank for the approaching glory of the newly-arisen war.

While thus each was full of his own hopes and expectations, I alone felt depressed and downhearted. My military caste was lost to me forever, my regiment many, many a mile from the scene of the coming strife; though young, I felt like one already old and bygone. The last-joined ensign seemed, in his glowing aspiration, a better soldier than I, as, sad and dispirited, I wandered through the busy crowds, surveying with curious eye each gallant horseman as he rode proudly past. What was wealth and fortune to me? What had they ever been, compared with all they cost me? — the abandonment of the career I loved, the path in life I sought and panted for. Day after day I lingered on, watching with beating heart each detachment as they left the shore; and when their parting cheer rang high above the breeze, turned sadly back to mourn over a life that had failed in its promise, and an existence now shorn of its enjoyment.

It was on the evening of the 3d of June that I was slowly wending my way back towards my hotel. Latterly I had refused all invitations to dine at the mess. And by a strange spirit of contradiction, while I avoided society, could yet not tear myself away from the spot where every remembrance of my past life was daily embittered by the scenes around me. But so it was; the movement of the troops, their reviews, their arrivals, and departures, possessed the most thrilling interest for me. While I could not endure to hear the mention of the high hopes and glorious vows each brave fellow muttered.

It was, as I remember, on the evening of the 3d of June, I entered my hotel lower in spirits even than usual. The bugles of the gallant Seventy-first, as they dropped down with the tide, played a well-known march I had heard the night before Talavera. All my bold and hardy days came rushing madly to my mind; and my present life seemed no longer endurable. The last army list and the newspaper lay on my table, and I turned to read the latest promotions with that feeling of bitterness by which an unhappy man loves to tamper with his misery.

Almost the first paragraph I threw my eyes upon ran thus: —

OSTEND, May 24.

The "Vixen" sloop-of-war, which arrived at our port this morning, brought among several other officers of inferior note Lieutenant-General Sir George Dashwood, appointed as Assistant-Adjutant-General on the staff of his Grace the Duke of Wellington. The gallant general was accompanied by his lovely and accomplished daughter, and his military secretary and aide-de-camp, Major Hammersley, of the 2d Life Guards. They partook of a hurried *déjeûné* with the Burgomaster, and left immediately after for Brussels.

Twice I read this over, while a burning, hot sensation settled upon my throat and temples. "So Hammersley still persists; he still hopes. And what then? — what can it be to me? — my prospects have long since faded and vanished! Doubtless, ere this, I am as much forgotten as though we had never met, — would that we never had!" I threw up the window-sash; a light breeze was gently stirring, and as it fanned my hot and bursting head, I felt cooled and relieved. Some soldiers were talking beneath the window and among them I recognized Mike's voice.

"And so you sail at daybreak, Sergeant?"

"Yes, Mister Free; we have our orders to be on board before the flood-tide. The 'Thunderer' drops down the harbor to-night, and we are merely here to collect our stragglers."

"Faix, it's little I thought I'd ever envy a sodger any more; but someway, I wish I was going with you."

"Nothing easier, Mike," said another, laughing.

"Oh, true for you, but that's not the way I'd like to do it. If my master, now, would just get over his low spirits, and spake a word to the Duke of York, devil a doubt but he'd give him his commission back again, and then one might go in comfort."

"Your master likes his feather pillow better than a mossy stone under his head, I'm thinking; and he ain't far wrong either."

"You're out there, Neighbor. It's himself cares as little for hardship as any one of you; and sure it's not becoming me to say it, but the best blood and the best bred was always the last to give in for either cold or hunger, ay, or even complain of it."

Mike's few words shot upon me a new and a sudden conviction, — what was to prevent my joining once more? Obvious as such a thought now was, yet never until this moment did it present itself so palpably. So habituated does the mind become to a certain train of reasoning, framing its convictions according to one preconceived plan, and making every fact and every circumstance concur in strengthening what often may be but a prejudice, — that the absence of the old Fourteenth in India, the sale of my commission, the want of rank in the service, all seemed to present an insurmountable barrier to my re-entering the army. A few chance words now changed all this, and I saw that as a volunteer at least, the path of glory was still open, and the thought was no sooner conceived, than the resolve to execute it. While, therefore, I walked hurriedly up and down, devising, planning, plotting, and contriving, each instant I would stop to ask myself how it happened I had not determined upon this before.

As I summoned Mike before me, I could not repress a feeling of false shame, as I remembered how suddenly so natural a resolve must seem to have been adopted; and it was with somewhat of hesitation that I opened the conversation.

"And so, sir, you are going after all, — long life to you? But I never doubted it. Sure, you would n't be your father's son, and not join divarsion when there was any going on."

The poor fellow's eyes brightened up, his look gladdened, and before he reached the foot of the stairs, I heard his loud cheer of delight that once more we were off to the wars.

The packet sailed for Liverpool the next morning. By it we took our passage, and on the third morning I found myself in the waiting-room at the Horse Guards, expecting the moment of his Royal Highness's arrival; my determination being to serve as a volunteer in any regiment the duke might suggest, until such time as a prospect presented itself of entering the service as a subaltern.

The room was crowded by officers of every rank and arm in the service. The old, gray-headed general of division; the tall, stout-looking captain of infantry; the thin and boyish figure of the newly-gazetted cornet, — were all there; every accent, every look that marked each trait of national distinction in the empire, had its representative. The reserved and distant Scotchman; the gay, laughing, exuberant Patlander; the dark-eyed, and dark-browed North Briton, — collected in groups, talked eagerly together; while every instant, as some new arrival would enter, all eyes would turn to the spot, in eager expectation of the duke's coming. At last the clash of arms, as the guard turned out, apprised us of his approach, and we had scarcely time to stand up and stop the buzz of voices, when the door opened, and an aide-de-camp proclaimed in a full tone, —

"His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief!"

Bowing courteously on every side, he advanced through the crowd, turning his rapid and piercing look here and there through the room, while with that tact, the essential gift of his family, he recognized each person by his name, directing from one to the other some passing observation.

"Ah, Sir George Cockburn, how d' ye do? — your son's appointment is made out. Major Conyers, that application shall be looked to. Forbes, you must explain that I cannot possibly put men in the regiment of their choice; the service is the first thing. Lord L——, your memorial is before the Prince Regent; the cavalry command will, I believe, however, include your name."

While he spoke thus, he approached the place where I was standing, when, suddenly checking himself, he looked at me for a moment somewhat sternly.

"Why not in uniform, sir?"

"Your Royal Highness, I am not in the army."

"Not in the army — not in the army? And why, may I beg to know, have you — But I'm speaking to *Captain* O'Malley, if I mistake not?"

"I held that rank, sir, once; but family necessities compelled me to sell out. I have now no commission in the service, but am come to beseech your Royal Highness's permission to serve as a volunteer."

"As a volunteer, eh — a volunteer? Come, that's right, I like that; but still, we want such fellows as you, — the man of Ciudad Rodrigo. Yes, my Lord L——, this is one of the stormers; fought his way through the trench among the first; must not be neglected. Hold yourself in readiness, Captain — hang it, I was forgetting; Mr. O'Malley, I mean — hold yourself in readiness for a staff appointment. Smithson, take a note of this." So saying, he moved on; and I found myself in the street, with a heart bounding with delight, and a step proud as an emperor's.

With such rapidity the events of my life now followed one upon the other, that I could take no note of time as it passed. On the fourth day after my conversation with the duke I found myself in Brussels. As yet I heard nothing of the appointment, nor was I gazetted to any regiment or any situation on the staff. It was strange enough, too, I met but few of my old associates, and not one of those with whom I had been most intimate in my Peninsular career; but it so chanced that very many of the regiments who most distinguished themselves in the Spanish campaigns, at the peace of 1814 were sent on foreign service. My old friend Power was, I learned, quartered at Courtrai; and as I was perfectly at liberty to dispose of my movements at present, I resolved to visit him there.

It was a beautiful evening on the 12th of June. I had been inquiring concerning post-horses for my journey, and was returning slowly through the park. The hour was late — near midnight — but a pale moonlight, a calm, unruffled air, and stronger inducements still, the song of the nightingales that abound in this place, prevailed on many of the loungers to prolong their stay; and so from many a shady walk and tangled arbor, the clank of a sabre would strike upon the ear, or the low, soft voice of woman would mingle her dulcet sound with the deep tones of her companion. I wandered on, thoughtful and alone; my mind preoccupied so completely with the mighty events passing before me, I totally forgot my own humble career, and the circumstances of my fortune. As I turned into an alley which leads from the Great Walk towards the Palace of the Prince of Orange, I found my path obstructed by three persons who were walking slowly along in front of me. I was, as I have mentioned, deeply absorbed in thought, so that I found myself close behind them before I was aware of their presence. Two of the party were in uniform, and by their plumes, upon which a passing ray of moonlight flickered, I could detect they were general officers; the third was a lady. Unable to pass them, and unwilling to turn back, I was unavoidably compelled to follow, and however unwilling, to overhear somewhat of their conversation.

"You mistake, George, you mistake! Depend upon it, this will be no lengthened campaign; victory will soon decide for one side or the other. If Napoleon beats the Prussians one day, and beat us the next, the German States will rally to his standard, and the old confederation of the Rhine will spring up once more in all the plenitude of its power. The *Champ de Mai* has shown the enthusiasm of France for their Emperor. Louis XVIII. fled from his capital, with few to follow, and none to say, 'God bless him!' The warlike spirit of the nation is roused again; the interval of peace, too short to teach habits of patient and enduring industry, is yet sufficient to whet the appetite for carnage; and nothing was wanting, save the presence of Napoleon alone, to restore all the brilliant delusions and intoxicating splendors of the empire."

"I confess," said the other, "I take a very different view from yours in this matter; to me, it seems that France is as tired of battles as of the Bourbons — "

I heard no more; for though the speaker continued, a misty confusion passed across my mind. The tones of his voice, well-remembered as they were by me, left me unable to think; and as I stood motionless on the spot, I muttered half aloud, "Sir George Dashwood." It was he, indeed; and she who leaned upon his arm could be no other than Lucy herself. I know not how it was; for many a long month I had schooled my heart, and taught myself to believe that time had dulled the deep impression she had made upon me, and that, were we to meet again, it would be with more sorrow on my part for my broken dream of happiness than of attachment and affection for her who inspired it; but now, scarcely was I near her — I had not gazed upon her looks, I had not even heard her voice — and yet, in all their ancient force, came back the early passages of my love; and as her footfall sounded gently upon the ground, my heart beat scarce less audibly. Alas, I could no longer disguise from myself the avowal that she it was, and she only, who implanted in my heart the thirst for distinction; and the moment was ever present to my mind in which, as she threw her arms around her father's neck, she muttered, "Oh, why not a soldier!"

As I thus reflected, an officer in full dress passed me hurriedly, and taking off his hat as he came up with the party before me, bowed obsequiously.

"My Lord——, I believe, and Sir George Dashwood?" They replied by a bow. "Sir Thomas Picton wishes to speak with you both for a moment; he is standing beside the 'Basin.' If you will permit—" said he, looking towards Lucy.

"Thank you, sir," said Sir George; "if you will have the goodness to accompany us, my daughter will wait our coming here. Sit down, Lucy, we shall not be long away."

The next moment she was alone. The last echoes of their retiring footsteps had died away in the grassy walk, and in the calm and death-like stillness I could hear every rustle of her silk dress. The moonlight fell in fitful, straggling gleams between the leafy branches, and showed me her countenance, pale as marble. Her eyes were upturned slightly; her brown hair, divided upon her fair forehead, sparkled with a wreath of brilliants, which heightened the lustrous effect of her calm beauty; and now I could perceive her dress bespoke that she had been at some of the splendid entertainments which followed day after day in the busy capital.

Thus I stood within a few paces of *her*, to be near to whom, a few hours before, I would willingly have given all I possessed in the world; and yet now a barrier, far more insurmountable than time and space, intervened between us; still it seemed as though fortune had presented this incident as a last farewell between us. Why should I not take advantage of it? Why should I not seize the only opportunity that might ever occur of rescuing myself from the apparent load of ingratitude which weighed on my memory? I felt in the cold despair of my heart that I could have no hold upon her affection; but a pride, scarce less strong that the attachment that gave rise to it, urged me to speak. By one violent effort I summoned up my courage; and while I resolved to limit the few words I should say merely to my vindication, I prepared to advance. Just at this instant, however, a shadow crossed the path; a rustling sound was heard among the branches, and the tall figure of a man in a dragoon cloak stood before me. Lucy turned suddenly at the sound; but scarcely had her eyes been bent in the direction, when, throwing off his cloak, he sprang forward and dropped at her feet. All my feeling of shame at the part I was performing was now succeeded by a sense of savage and revengeful hatred. It was enough that I should be brought to look upon her whom I had lost forever without the added bitterness of witnessing her preference for a rival. The whirlwind passion of my brain stunned and stupefied me. Unconsciously I drew my sword from my scabbard, and it was only as the pale light fell upon the keen blade that the thought flashed across me, "What could I mean to do?"

"No, Hammersley," — it was he indeed, — said she, "it is unkind, it is unfair, nay, it is unmanly to press me thus; I would not pain you, were it not that, in sparing you now, I should entail deeper injury upon you hereafter. Ask me to be your sister, your friend; ask me to feel proudly in your triumphs, to glory in your success; all this I do feel; but, oh! I beseech you, as you value your happiness, as you prize mine, ask me no more than this."

There was a pause of some seconds; and at length, the low tones of a man's voice, broken and uncertain in their utterance, said, —

"I know it — I feel it — my heart never bade me hope — and now — 't is over."

He stood up as he spoke, and while he threw the light folds of his mantle round him, a gleam of light fell upon his features. They were pale as death; two dark circles surrounded his sunken eyes, and his bloodless lip looked still more ghastly, from the dark mustache that drooped above it.

"Farewell!" said he, slowly, as he crossed his arms sadly upon his breast; "I will not pain you more."

"Oh, go not thus from me!" said she, as her voice became tremulous with emotion; "do not add to the sorrow that weighs upon my heart! I cannot, indeed I cannot, be other than I am; and I do but hate myself to think that I cannot give my love where I have given all my esteem. If time —" But before she could continue further, the noise of approaching footsteps was heard, and the voice of Sir George, as he came near. Hammersley disappeared at once, and Lucy, with rapid steps, advanced to meet her father, while I remained riveted upon the spot. What a torrent of emotions then rushed upon my heart! What hopes, long dead or dying, sprang up to life again! What visions of long-abandoned happiness flitted before me! Could it be then — dare I trust myself to think it — that Lucy cared for me? The thought was maddening! With a bounding sense of ecstasy, I dashed across the park, resolving, at all hazards, to risk everything upon the chance, and wait the next morning upon Sir George Dashwood. As I thought thus, I reached my hotel, where I found Mike in waiting with a letter. As I walked towards the lamp in the *porte cochère*, my eyes fell upon the address. It was General Dashwood's hand; I tore it open, and read as follows: —

DEAR SIR, — Circumstances into which you will excuse me entering, having placed an insurmountable barrier to our former terms of intimacy, you will, I trust, excuse me declining the honor of any nearer acquaintance, and also forgive the liberty I take in informing you of it, which step, however unpleasant to my feelings, will save us both the great pain of meeting.

I have only this moment heard of your arrival in Brussels, and take thus the earliest opportunity of communicating with you.

With every assurance of my respect for you personally, and an earnest desire to serve you in your military career, I beg to remain,

Very faithfully yours,

GEORGE DASHWOOD

"Another note, sir," said Mike, as he thrust into my unconscious hands a letter he had just received from an orderly.

Stunned, half stupefied, I broke the seal. The contents were but three lines: —

> Sir, — I have the honor to inform you that Sir Thomas Picton has appointed you an extra aide-de-camp on his personal staff. You will, therefore, present yourself to-morrow morning at the Adjutant-General's office, to receive your appointment and instructions.
>
> I have the honor to be, etc.,
>
> G. Fitzroy.

Crushing the two letters in my fevered hand, I retired to my room, and threw myself, dressed as I was, upon my bed. Sleep, that seems to visit us in the saddest as in the happiest times of our existence, came over me, and I did not wake until the bugles of the Ninety-fifth were sounding the reveille through the park, and the brightest beams of the morning sun were peering through the window.

CHAPTER L.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

"Mr. O'Malley," said a voice, as my door opened, and an officer in undress entered, — "Mr. O'Malley, I believe you received your appointment last night on General Picton's staff?"

I bowed in reply, as he resumed: —

"Sir Thomas desires you will proceed to Courtrai with these despatches in all haste. I don't know if you are well mounted, but I recommend you, in any case, not to spare your cattle."

So saying, he wished me a good-morning, and left me, in a state of no small doubt and difficulty, to my own reflections. What the deuce was I to do? I had no horse; I knew not where to find one. What uniform should I wear? For, although appointed on the staff, I was not gazetted to any regiment that I knew of, and hitherto had been wearing an undress frock and a foraging cap; for I could not bring myself to appear as a civilian among so many military acquaintances. No time was, however, to be lost; so I proceeded to put on my old Fourteenth uniform, wondering whether my costume might not cost me a reprimand in the very outset of my career. Meanwhile I despatched Mike to see after a horse, caring little for the time, the merits, or the price of the animal provided he served my present purpose.

In less than twenty minutes my worthy follower appeared beneath my window, surrounded by a considerable mob, who seemed to take no small interest in the proceedings.

"What the deuce is the matter?" cried I, as I opened the sash and looked out.

"Mighty little 's the matter, your honor; it 's the savages, here, that 's admiring my horsemanship," said Mike, as he belabored a tall, scraggy-looking mule with a stick which bore an uncommon resemblance to a broom-handle.

"What do you mean to do with that beast?" said I. "You surely don't expect me to ride a mule to Courtrai?"

"Faith, and if you don't, you are likely to walk the journey; for there isn't a horse to be had for love or money in the town; but I am told that Mr. Marsden is coming up to-morrow with plenty, so that you may as well take the journey out of the soft horns as spoil a better; and if he only makes as good use of his fore-legs as he does of his hind ones, he'll think little of the road."

A vicious lash out behind served in a moment to corroborate Mike's assertion, and to scatter the crowd on every side.

However indisposed to exhibit myself with such a turnout, my time did not admit of any delay; and so, arming myself with my despatches, and having procured the necessary information as to the road, I set out from the Belle Vue, amidst an ill-suppressed titter of merriment from the mob, which nothing but fear of Mike and his broomstick prevented becoming a regular shout of laughter.

It was near nightfall as, tired and weary of the road, I entered the little village of Halle. All was silent and noiseless in the deserted streets; nor a lamp threw its glare upon the pavement, nor even a solitary candle flickered through the casement. Unlike a town garrisoned by troops, neither sentry nor outpost was to be met with; nothing gave evidence that the place was held by a large body of men; and I could not help feeling struck, as the footsteps of my mule were echoed along the causeway, with the silence almost of desolation around me. By the creaking of a sign, as it swung mournfully to and fro, I was directed to the door of the village inn, where, dismounting, I knocked for some moments, but without success. At length, when I had made an uproar sufficient to alarm the entire village, the casement above the door slowly opened, and a head enveloped in a huge cotton nightcap — so, at least, it appeared to me from the size — protruded itself. After muttering a curse in about the most barbarous French I ever heard, he asked me what I wanted there; to which I replied, most nationally, by asking in return, where the British dragoons were quartered.

"They have left for Nivelle this morning, to join some regiments of your own country."

"Ah! ah!" thought I, "he mistakes me for a Brunswicker;" to which, by the uncertain light, my uniform gave me some resemblance. As it was now impossible for me to proceed farther, I begged to ask where I could procure accommodation for the night.

"At the burgomaster's. Turn to your left at the end of this street, and you will soon find it. They have got some English officers there, who, I believe in my soul, never sleep."

This was, at least, pleasant intelligence, and promised a better termination to my journey than I had begun to hope for; so wishing my friend a good-night, to which he willingly responded, I resumed my way down the street. As he closed the window, once more leaving me to my own reflections, I began to wonder within myself to what arm of the service belonged these officers to whose convivial gifts he bore testimony. As I turned the corner of the

[illegible]

street, I soon discovered the correctness of his information. A broad glare of light stretched across the entire pavement from a large house with a clumsy stone portico before it. On coming nearer, the sound of voices, the roar of laughter, the shouts of merriment that issued forth, plainly bespoke that a jovial party were seated within. The half-shutter which closed the lower part of the windows prevented my obtaining a view of the proceedings; but having cautiously approached the casement, I managed to creep on the window-sill and look into the room.

There the scene was certainly a curious one. Around a large table sat a party of some twenty persons, the singularity of whose appearance may be conjectured when I mention that all those who appeared to be British officers were dressed in the robes of the *échevins* (or aldermen) of the village; while some others, whose looks bespoke them as sturdy Flemings, sported the cocked hats and cavalry helmets of their associates. He who appeared the ruler of the feast sat with his back towards me, and wore, in addition to the dress of burgomaster, a herald's tabard, which gave him something the air of a grotesque screen at its potations. A huge fire blazed upon the ample hearth, before which were spread several staff uniforms, whose drabbled and soaked appearance denoted the reason of the party's change of habiliments. Every imaginable species of drinking-vessel figured upon the board, from the rich flagon of chased silver to the humble *cruche* we see in a Teniers picture. As well as I could hear, the language of the company seemed to be French, or, at least, such an imitation of that language as served as a species of neutral territory for both parties to meet in.

He of the tabard spoke louder than the others, and although, from the execrable endeavors he made to express himself in French, his natural voice was much altered, there was yet something in his accents which seemed perfectly familiar to me.

"Mosheer l'Abbey," said he, placing his arm familiarly on the shoulder of a portly personage, whose shaven crown strangely contrasted with a pair of corked moustachios, — "Mosheer l'Abbey, nous sommes frères, et moi, savez-vous, suis évêque, — 'pon my life it 's true ; I might have been Bishop of Saragossa, if I only consented to leave the Twenty-third. Je suis bong Catholique. Lord bless you, if you saw how I loved the nunneries in Spain ! J' ai très jolly souvenirs of those nunneries ; a goodly company of little silver saints ; and this waistcoat you see — mong gilet — was a satin petticoat of our Lady of Loretto."

Need I say, that before this speech was concluded, I had recognized in the speaker nobody but that inveterate old villain, Monsoon himself.

"Permettez, votre Excellence," said a hale, jolly-looking personage on his left, as he filled the major's goblet with obsequious politeness.

"Bong engfong," replied Monsoon, tapping him familiarly on the head. "Burgomaster, you are a trump ; and when I get my promotion, I 'll make you prefect in a wine district. Pass the lush, and don't look sleepy ! 'Drowsiness,' says Solomon, 'clothes a man in rags ;' and no man knew the world better than Solomon. Don't you be laughing, you raw boys. Never mind them, Abbey ; ils sont petits garçongs — fags from Eton and Harrow ; better judges of mutton broth than sherry negus."

"I say, Major, you are forgetting this song you promised us."

"Yes, yes," said several voices together ; "the song, Major ! the song ! "

"Time enough for that ; we 're doing very well as it is. Upon my life, though, they hold a deal of wine. I thought we 'd have had them fit to bargain with before ten, and see, it 's near midnight ; and I must have my forage accounts ready for the commissary-general by to-morrow morning."

This speech having informed me the reason of the Major's presence there, I resolved to wait no longer a mere spectator of their proceedings ; so dismounting from my position, I commenced a vigorous attack upon the door.

It was some time before I was heard ; but at length the door was opened, and I was accosted by an Englishman, who, in a strange compound of French and English, asked, "What the devil I meant by all that uproar ? " Determining to startle my old friend the major, I replied, that "I was aide-de-camp to General Picton, and had come down on very unpleasant business." By this time the noise of the party within had completely subsided, and from a few whispered sentences, and their thickened breathing, I perceived that they were listening.

"May I ask, sir," continued I, "if Major Monsoon is here ?"

"Yes," stammered out the ensign, for such he was.

"Sorry for it, for his sake," said I; "but my orders are peremptory."

A deep groan from within, and a muttered request to pass down the sherry, nearly overcame my gravity; but I resumed: —

"If you will permit me, I will make the affair as short as possible. The major, I presume, is here ?"

So saying, I pushed forward into the room, where now a slight scuffling noise and murmur of voices had succeeded silence. Brief as was the interval of our colloquy, the scene within had, notwithstanding, undergone considerable change. The English officers, hastily throwing off their aldermanic robes, were busily arraying themselves in their uniforms, while Monsoon himself, with a huge basin of water before him, was endeavoring to wash the cork from his countenance in the corner of his tabard.

"Very hard upon me, all this; upon my life, so it is! Picton is always at me, just as if we had not been schoolfellows. The service is getting worse every day. Regardez-moi, Curey, mong face est propre ? Eh? There, thank you. Good fellow the Curey is, but takes a deal of fluid. Oh, Burgomaster! I fear it is all up with me! No more fun, no more jollification, no more plunder — and how I did do it. Nothing like watching one's little chances! 'The poor is hated even by his neighbor.' Oui, Curey, it is Solomon says that, and they must have had a heavy poor-rate in his day to make him say so. Another glass of sherry!"

By this time I approached the back of the chair, and slapping him heartily on the shoulder, called out, —

"Major, old boy, how goes it ?"

"Eh ? — what — how ! — who is this ? It can't be —

egad, sure it is, though. Charley! Charley O'Malley, you scapegrace, where have you been? When did you join?"

"A week ago, Major. I could resist it no longer. I did my best to be a country gentleman, and behave respectably, but the old temptation was too strong for me. Fred Power and yourself, Major, had ruined my education; and here I am once more among you."

"And so Picton and the arrest and all that, was nothing but a joke?" said the old fellow, rolling his wicked eyes with a most cunning expression.

"Nothing more, Major, set your heart at rest."

"What a scamp you are," said he, with another grin. "Il est mon fils — il est mon fils, Curey," presenting me, as he spoke, while the burgomaster, in whose eyes the major seemed no inconsiderable personage, saluted me with profound respect.

Turning at once towards this functionary, I explained that I was the bearer of important despatches, and that my horse — I was ashamed to say my mule — having fallen lame, I was unable to proceed.

"Can you procure me a remount, Monsieur?" said I, "for I must hasten on to Courtrai."

"In half an hour you shall be provided, as well as with a mounted guide for the road. Le fils de son Excellence," said he, with emphasis, bowing to the major as he spoke; who, in his turn, repaid the courtesy with a still lower obeisance.

"Sit down, Charley; here is a clean glass. I am delighted to see you, my boy! They tell me you have got a capital estate and plenty of ready. Lord, we so wanted you, as there 's scarcely a fellow with sixpence among us. Give me the lad that can do a bit of paper at three months, and always be ready for a renewal. You have n't got a twenty-pound note?" This was said *sotto voce.* "Never mind; ten will do. You can give me the remainder at Brussels. Strange, is it not, I have not seen a bit of clean bank paper like this for above a twelvemonth!" This was said as he thrust his hand into his pocket, with one of those peculiar leers upon his countenance which, unfortunately, betrayed more satisfaction at his success than gratitude for the service. "You are looking fat — too fat, I think," said he, scrutinizing me from head to foot; "but the life we are leading just now will soon take that off. The slave-trade is luxurious indolence compared to it. Post haste to Nivelle one day; down to Ghent the next; forty miles over a paved road in a hand-gallop, and an aide-de-camp with a watch in his hand at the end of it, to report if you are ten minutes too late. And there is Wellington has his eye everywhere. There is not a truss of hay served to the cavalry, nor a pair of shoes half-soled in the regiment, that he don't know of it. I 've got it over the knuckles already."

"How so, Major? How was that?"

"Why, he ordered me to picket two squadrons of the Seventh, and a supper was waiting. I did n't like to leave my quarters, so I took up my telescope and pitched upon a sweet little spot of ground on a hill; rather difficult to get up, to be sure, but a beautiful view when you 're on it. 'There is your ground, Captain,' said I, as I sent one of my people to mark the spot. He did not like it much; however, he was obliged to go. And, would you believe it? — so much for bad luck! — there turned out to be no water within two miles of it — not a drop, Charley; and so, about eleven at night, the two squadrons moved down into Grammont to wet their lips, and what is worse, to report me to the commanding officer. And only think! They put me under arrest because Providence did not make a river run up a mountain!"

Just as the major finished speaking, the distant clatter of horses' feet and the clank of cavalry was heard approaching. We all rushed eagerly to the door; and scarcely had we done so, when a squadron of dragoons came riding up the street at a fast trot.

"I say, good people," cried the officer, in French, "where does the burgomaster live here?"

"Fred Power, 'pon my life!" shouted the major.

"Eh, Monsoon, that you? Give me a tumbler of wine, old boy; you are sure to have some, and I am desperately blown."

"Get down, Fred, get down! We have an old friend here."

"Who the deuce d' ye mean?" said he, as throwing himself from the saddle he strode into the room. "Charley O'Malley, by all that 's glorious!"

"Fred, my gallant fellow!" said I.

"It was but this morning, Charley, that I so wished for you here. The French are advancing, my lad. They have crossed the frontier; Zeithen's corps have been attacked and driven in; Blucher is falling back upon Ligny; and the campaign is opened. But I must press forward. The regiment is close behind me, and we are ordered to push for Brussels in all haste."

"Then these despatches," said I, showing my packet, "'t is unnecessary to proceed with?"

"Quite so. Get into the saddle and come back with us."

The burgomaster had kept his word with me; so mounted upon a strong hackney, I set out with Power on the road to Brussels. I have had occasion more than once to ask pardon of my reader for the prolixity of my narrative, so I shall not trespass on him here by the detail of our conversation as we jogged along. Of me and my adventures he already knows enough — perhaps too much. My friend Power's career, abounding as it did in striking incidents, and all the light and shadow of a soldier's life, yet not bearing upon any of the characters I have presented to your acquaintance, except in one instance, — of that only shall I speak.

"And the senhora, Fred; how goes your fortune in that quarter?"

"Gloriously, Charley! I am every day expecting the promotion in my regiment which is to make her mine."

"You have heard from her lately, then?"

"Heard from her! Why, man, she is in Brussels."

"In Brussels?"

"To be sure. Don Emanuel is in high favor with the duke, and is now commissary-general with the army; and the senhora is the *belle* of the Rue Royale, or at least, it 's a divided sovereignty between her and Lucy Dashwood. And now, Charley, let me ask, what of her? There, there, don't blush, man. There is quite enough moonlight to show how tender you are in that quarter."

"Once for all, Fred, pray spare me on that subject. You have been far too fortunate in your *affaire de cœur*, and I too much the reverse, to permit much sympathy between us."

"Do you not visit, then; or is it a cut between you?"

"I have never met her since the night of the masquerade of the villa — at least, to speak to —"

"Well, I must confess, you seem to manage your own affairs much worse than your friends'; not but that in so doing you are exhibiting a very Irish feature of your character. In any case, you will come to the ball? Inez will be delighted to see you; and I have got over all my jealousy."

"What ball? I never heard of it."

"Never heard of it! Why, the Duchess of Richmond's, of course. Pooh, pooh, man! Not invited? — of course you are invited; the staff are never left out on such occasions. You will find your card at your hotel on your return."

"In any case, Fred —"

"I shall insist upon your going. I have no *arrière pensée* about a reconciliation with the Dashwoods, no subtle scheme, on my honor; but simply I feel that you will never give yourself fair chances in the world, by indulging your habit of shrinking from every embarrassment. Don't be offended, boy. I know you have pluck enough to storm a battery; I have seen you under fire before now. What avails your courage in the field, if you have not presence of mind in the drawing-room? Besides, everything else out of the question, it is a breach of etiquette towards your chief to decline such an invitation."

"You think so?"

"Think so? — no; I am sure of it."

"Then, as to uniform, Fred?"

"Oh, as to that, easily managed. And now I think of it, they have sent me an unattached uniform, which you can have; but remember, my boy, if I put you in my coat, I don't want you to stand in my shoes. Don't forget also that I am your debtor in horseflesh, and fortunately able to repay you. I have got such a charger; your own favorite color, dark chestnut, and except one white leg, not a spot about him; can carry sixteen stone over a five-foot fence, and as steady as a rock under fire."

"But, Fred, how are you —"

"Oh, never mind me; I have six in my stable, and intend to share with you. The fact is, I have been transferred from one staff to another for the last six months, and four of my number are presents. Is Mike with you? Ah, glad to hear it; you will never get on without that fellow. Besides, it is a capital thing to have such a connecting link with one's nationality. No fear of your ever forgetting Ireland with Mr. Free in your company. You are not aware that we have been correspondents. A fact, I assure you. Mike wrote me two letters; and such letters they were! The last was a Jeremiad over your decline and fall, with a very ominous picture of a certain Miss Baby Blake."

"Confound the rascal!"

"By Jove, though, Charley, you were coming it rather strong with Baby. Inez saw the letter, and as well as she could decipher Mike's hieroglyphics, saw there was something in it; but the name Baby puzzled her immensely, and she set the whole thing down to your great love of children. I don't think that Lucy quite agreed with her."

"Did she tell it to Miss Dashwood?" I inquired, with fear and trembling.

"Oh, that she did; in fact, Inez never ceases talking of you to Lucy. But come, lad, don't look so grave. Let's have another brush with the enemy; capture a battery of their guns; carry off a French marshal or two; get the Bath for your services, and be thanked in general orders, — and I will wager all my *château en Espagne* that everything goes well."

Thus chatting away, sometimes over the past, of our former friends and gay companions, of our days of storm and sunshine; sometimes indulging in prospects for the future, we trotted along, and as the day was breaking, mounted the ridge of low hills, from whence, at the distance of a couple of leagues, the city of Brussels came into view.

CHAPTER LI.

THE DUCHESS OF RICHMOND'S BALL.

Whether we regard the illustrious and distinguished personages who thronged around, or we think of the portentous moment in which it was given, the Duchess of Richmond's ball, on the night of the 15th of June, 1815, was not only one of the most memorable, but, in its interest, the most exciting entertainment that the memory of any one now living can compass.

There is always something of no common interest in seeing the bronzed and war-worn soldier mixing in the crowd of light-hearted and brilliant beauty. To watch the eye whose proud glance has flashed over the mail-clad squadrons now bending meekly beneath the look of some timid girl; to hear the voice that, high above the battle or the breeze, has shouted the hoarse word "Charge!" now subdued into the low, soft murmur of flattery or compliment. This, at any rate, is a picture full of its own charm; but when we see these heroes of a hundred fights; when we look upon these hardy veterans, upon whose worn brows the whitened locks of time are telling, indulging themselves in the careless gayety of a moment, snatched as it were from the arduous career of their existence, while the tramp of the advancing enemy shakes the very soil they stand on, and where it may be doubted whether each aide-de-camp who enters comes a new votary of pleasure or the bearer of tidings that the troops of the foe are advancing, and already the work of death has begun: this is, indeed, a scene to make the heart throb, and the pulse beat high; this is a moment second in its proud excitement only to the very crash and din of battle itself. And into this entrancing whirlwind of passion and of pleasure, of brilliant beauty and ennobled greatness, of all that is lovely in woman and all that is chivalrous and heroic in man, I brought a heart which, young in years, was yet tempered by disappointment; still, such was the fascination, such the brilliancy of the spectacle, that scarcely had I entered, than I felt a change come over me, — the old spirit of my boyish ardor, that high-wrought enthusiasm to do something, to be something which men may speak of, shot suddenly through me, and I felt my cheek tingle and my temples throb, as name after name of starred and titled officers were announced, to think that to me, also, the path of glorious enterprise was opening.

"Come along, come along," said Power, catching me by the arm, "you've not been presented to the duchess. I know her. I'll do it for you; or perhaps it is better Sir Thomas Picton should. In any case, *filez* after me, for the dark-eyed senhora is surely expecting us. There, do you see that dark, intelligent-looking fellow leaning over the end of the sofa? That is Alava. And there, you know who that is, that *beau ideal* of a hussar? Look how jauntily he carries himself; see the careless but graceful sling with which he edges through the crowd; and look! Mark his bow! Did you see that, Charley? Did you catch the quick glance he shot yonder, and the soft smile that showed his white teeth? Depend upon it, boy, some fair heart is not the better nor the easier for that look."

"Who is it?" said I.

"Lord Uxbridge, to be sure; the handsomest fellow in the service; and there goes Vandeleur, talking with Vivian; the other, to the left, is Ponsonby."

"But stay, Fred, tell me who that is?" For a moment or two, I had some difficulty in directing his attention to the quarter I desired. The individual I pointed out was somewhat above the middle size; his uniform of blue and gold, though singularly plain, had a look of richness about it; besides that, among the orders which covered his breast, he wore one star of great brilliancy and size. This, however, was his least distinction; for although surrounded on every side by those who might be deemed the very types and pictures of their *caste*, there was something in the easy but upright carriage of his head, the intrepid character of his features, the bold and vigorous flashing of his deep blue eye, that marked him as no common man. He was talking with an old and prosy-looking personage in civilian dress; and while I could detect an anxiety to get free from a tiresome companion, there was an air of deferential, and even kind attention in his manner, absolutely captivating.

"A thorough gentleman, Fred, whoever he be," said I.

"I should think so," replied Power, dryly; "and as our countrymen would say, 'The Devil thank him for it!' That is the Prince of Orange; but see, look at him now, his features have learned another fashion." And true it was; with a smile of the most winning softness, and with a voice, whose slightly foreign accent took nothing from its interest, I heard him engaging a partner for a waltz.

There was a flutter of excitement in the circle as the lady rose to take his arm, and a muttered sound of, "How very beautiful, quelle est belle, c'est un ange!" on all sides. I leaned forward to catch a glance as she passed; it was Lucy Dashwood. Beautiful beyond anything I had ever seen her, her lovely features lit up with pleasure and with pride, she looked in every way worthy to lean upon the arm of royalty. The graceful majesty of her walk, the placid loveliness of her gentle smile, struck every one as she passed on. As for me, totally forgetting all else, not seeing or hearing aught around me, I followed her with my eye until she was lost among the crowd, and then, with an impulse of which I was not master, followed in her steps.

"This way, this way," said Power; "I see the senhora." So saying, we entered a little boudoir, where a party was playing at cards. Leaning on the back of a chair, Inez was endeavoring, with that mixture of coquetry and half malice she possessed, to distract the attention of the player. As Power came near, she scarcely turned her head to give him a kind of saucy smile; while, seeing me, she held out her hand with friendly warmth, and seemed quite happy to meet me.

"Do, pray, take her away; get her to dance, to eat ice, or flirt with you, for Heaven's sake!" said the half-laughing voice of her victim. "I have revoked twice, and misdealt four times since she has been here. Believe me, I shall take it as the greatest favor, if you'll —"

As he got thus far he turned round towards me, and I perceived it was Sir George Dashwood. The meeting was as awkward for him as for me; and while a deep flush covered my face, he muttered some unintelligible apology, and Inez burst into a fit of laughter at the ludicrous *contretemps* of our situation.

"I will dance with you now, if you like," said she, "and that will be punishing all three. Eh, Master Fred?"

So saying, she took my arm as I led her toward the ball-room.

"And so you really are not friends with the Dashwoods? How very provoking, and how foolish, too! But really, Chevalier, I must say you treat ladies very ill. I don't forget your conduct to me. Dear me, I wish we could move forward, there is some one pushing me dreadfully!"

"Get on, Ma'am, get on!" said a sharp, decided voice behind me. I turned, half smiling, to see the speaker. It was the Duke of Wellington himself, who, with his eye fixed upon some person at a distance, seemed to care very little for any intervening obstruction. As I made way for him to pass between us, he looked hardly at me, while he said in a short, quick way, —

"Know your face very well: how d' ye do?" With this brief recognition he passed on, leaving me to console Inez for her crushed sleeve, by informing her who had done it.

The ball was now at its height. The waltzers whirled past in the wild excitement of the dance. The inspiriting strains of the music, the sounds of laughter, the din, the tumult, all made up that strange medley which, reacting upon the minds of those who cause it, increases the feeling of pleasurable abandonment, making the old feel young, and the young intoxicated with delight.

As the senhora leaned upon me, fatigued with waltzing, I was endeavoring to sustain a conversation with her; while my thoughts were wandering with my eyes to where I had last seen Lucy Dashwood.

"It must be something of importance; I 'm sure it is," said she, at the conclusion of a speech of which I had not heard one word. "Look at General Picton's face!"

"Very pretty, indeed," said I; "but the hair is unbecoming," replying to some previous observation she had made, and still lost in a revery. A hearty burst of laughter was her answer as she gently shook my arm, saying, —

"You really are too bad! You've never listened to one word I've been telling you, but keep continually staring with your eyes here and there, turning this way and looking that, and with a dull, vacant, and unmeaning smile, answering at random, in the most provoking manner. There now, pray pay attention, and tell me what that means." As she said this, she pointed with her fan to where a dragoon officer, in splashed and spattered uniform, was standing talking to some three or four general officers. "But here comes the duke; it can't be anything of consequence."

At the same instant the Duke of Wellington passed with the Duchess of Richmond on his arm.

"No, Duchess; nothing to alarm you. Did you say ice?"

"There, you heard that, I hope!" said Inez; "there is nothing to alarm us."

"Go to General Picton at once; but don't let it be remarked," said an officer, in a whisper, as he passed close by me.

"Inez, I have the greatest curiosity to learn what that new arrival has to say for himself; and if you will permit me, I'll leave you with Lady Gordon for one moment —"

"Delighted, of all things. You are without exception, the most tiresome — Good-by."

"Sans adieu," said I, as I hurried through the crowd towards an open window, on the balcony outside of which Sir Thomas Picton was standing.

"Ah, Mr. O'Malley, have you a pencil? There, that'll do. Ride down to Etterbeeck with this order for Godwin. You have heard the news, I suppose, that the French are in advance? The Seventy-ninth will muster in the Grande Place. The Ninety-second and the Twenty-eighth along the Park and the Boulevard. Napoleon left Fresnes this morning. The Prussians have fallen back. Zeithen has been beaten. We march at once."

"To-morrow, sir?"

"No, sir, to-night. There, don't delay! But above all, let everything be done quietly and noiselessly. The duke will remain here for an hour longer to prevent suspicion. When you've executed your orders, come back here."

I mounted the first horse I could find at the door, and galloped with top speed over the heavy causeway to Etterbeeck. In two minutes the drum beat to arms, and the men were mustering as I left. Thence I hastened to the barracks of the Highland Brigade and the 28th Regiment; and before half an hour, was back in the ball-room, where, from the din and tumult, I guessed the scene of pleasure and dissipation continued unabated. As I hurried up the staircase a throng of persons were coming down, and I was obliged to step aside to let them pass.

"Ah, come here, pray," said Picton, who, with a lady cloaked and hooded leaning upon his arm, was struggling to make way through the crowd. "The very man!"

"Will you excuse me if I commit you to the care of my aide-de-camp, who will see you to your carriage? The duke has just desired to see me." This he said in a hurried and excited tone; and the same moment beckoned to me to take the lady's arm.

It was with some difficulty I succeeded in reaching the spot, and had only time to ask whose carriage I should call for, ere we arrived in the hall.

"Sir George Dashwood's," said a low, soft voice, whose accents sank into my very heart. Heaven! it was Lucy herself; it was her arm that leaned on mine, her locks that fluttered beside me, her hand that hung so near, and yet I could not speak. I tried one word; but a choking feeling in my throat prevented utterance, and already we were upon the door-steps.

"Sir George Dashwood's carriage," shouted the footman, and the announcement was repeated by the porter. The steps were hurried down; the footman stood door in hand; and I led her forward, mute and trembling. Did she know me? I assisted her as she stepped in; her hand touched mine: it was the work of a second; to me it was the bliss of years. She leaned a little forward; and as the servant put up the steps, said in her soft, sweet tone, "Thank you, sir. Good-night."

I felt my shoulder touched by some one who, it appeared, was standing close to me for some seconds; but so occupied was I in gazing at her that I paid no attention to the circumstance. The carriage drove away and disappeared in the thick darkness of a starless night. I turned to re-enter the house, and as I did so, the night lamp of the hall fell upon the features of the man beside me, and showed me the pale and corpse-like face of Fred Hammersley. His eye was bent upon me with an expression of fierce and fiery passion, in which the sadness of long-suffering also mingled. His bloodless lips parted, moved as though speaking, while yet no sound issued; and his nostril, dilating and contracting by turns, seemed to denote some deep and hidden emotion that worked within him.

"Hammersley," said I, holding out my hand towards him, — "Hammersley, do not always mistake me?"

He shook his head mournfully as it fell forward upon his breast, and covering his arm, moved slowly away without speaking.

General Picton's voice as he descended the stairs, accompanied by Generals Vandeleur and Vivian, aroused me at once, and I hurried towards him.

"Now, sir, to horse. The troops will defile by the Namur gate, and meet me there in an hour. Meanwhile tell Colonel Cameron that he must march with the light companies of his own and the Ninety-second at once."

"I say, Picton, they'll say we were taken by surprise in England; won't they?" said a sharp, strong voice, in a half-laughing tone from behind.

"No, your Grace," said Sir Thomas, bowing slightly; "they'll scarcely do so when they hear the time we took to get under arms."

I heard no more; but throwing myself into the saddle of my troop horse, once more rode back to the Belle Vue to make ready for the road.

The thin pale crescent of a new moon, across which masses of dark and inky clouds were hurrying, tipped with its faint and sickly light the tall minarets of the Hôtel de Ville, as I rode into the Grande Place. Although midnight, the streets were as crowded as at noonday; horse, foot, and dragoons passing and hurrying hither; the wild pibroch of the Highlander; the mellow bugle of the Seventy-first; the hoarse trumpet of the cavalry; the incessant roll of the drum, — mingled their sounds with the tide of human voices, in which every accent was heard, from the reckless cheer of anticipated victory, to the heart-piercing shriek of woman's agony. Lights gleamed from every window; from the doors of almost every house poured forth a crowd of soldiers and townsfolk. The sergeants, on one side, might be seen telling off their men, their cool and steady countenances evidencing no semblance of emotion; while near them some young ensign, whose beardless cheek and vacant smile bespoke the mere boy, looked on with mingled pride and wonder at the wild scene before him. Every now and then some general officer with his staff came cantering past; and as the efforts to muster and form the troops grew more pressing, I could mark how soon we were destined to meet the enemy.

There are few finer monuments of the architecture of the Middle Ages than the Grande Place of Brussels, — the rich façade of the Hôtel de Ville, with its long colonnade of graceful arches, upon every keystone of which some grim, grotesque head is peering; the massive cornices; the heavy corbels carved into ten thousand strange and uncouth fancies; but finer than all, the taper and stately spire, fretted and perforated like some piece of silver filigree, stretches upward towards the sky, its airy pinnacle growing finer and more beautiful as it nears the stars it points to. How full of historic associations is every dark embrasure, every narrow casement around! Here may have stood the great emperor, Charles the Fifth, meditating upon that greatness he was about to forego forever; here from this tall window, may have looked the sad and sickly features of Jeanne Laffolle, as with wandering eye and idiot smile she gazed upon the gorgeous procession beneath. There is not a stone that has not echoed to the tread of haughty prince or bold baron; yet never, in the palmiest days of ancient chivalry, did those proud dwellings of the great of old look out upon a braver and more valiant host than now thronged beneath their shadow. It was indeed a splendid sight, where the bright gleams of torch and lantern threw the red light around, to watch the measured tread and steady tramp of the Highland regiments as they defiled into the open space; each footstep as it met the ground, seeming in its proud and firm tread, to move in more than sympathy with the wild notes of their native mountains; silent and still they moved along; no voice spoke within their ranks, save that of some command to "Close up — take ground — to the right — rear rank — close order." Except such brief words as these, or the low muttered praise of some veteran general as he rode down the line, all was orderly and steady as on a parade. Meanwhile, from an angle of the square, the band of an approaching regiment was heard; and to the inspiriting quickness of "The Young May Moon," the gallant Twenty-eighth came forward and took up their ground opposite to the Highlanders.

The deep bell of the Hôtel de Ville tolled one. The solemn sound rang out and died away in many an echo, leaving upon the heart a sense of some unknown depression; and there was something like a knell in the deep cadence of its bay; and over many a cheek a rapid trace of gloomy thought now passed; and true — too true, alas! — how many now listened for the last time!

"March! march!" passed from front to rear; and as the bands burst forth again in streams of spirit-stirring harmony, the Seventy-ninth moved on; the Twenty-eighth followed; and as they debouched from the "Place" the Seventy-first and the Ninety-second succeeded them. Like wave after wave, the tide of armed men pressed on, and mounted the steep and narrow street towards the upper town of Brussels. Here Pack's Brigade was forming in the Place Royale; and a crowd of staff officers dictating orders, and writing hurriedly on the drum-heads, were also seen. A troop of dragoons stood beside their horses at the door of the Belle Vue, and several grooms with led horses walked to and fro.

"Ride forward, sir, to the Bois de Cambre," said Picton, "and pivot the troops on the road to Mont St. Jean. You will then wait for my coming up, or further orders."

This command, which was given to me, I hastened to obey; and with difficulty forcing my way through the opposing crowd, at length reached the Namur gate. Here I found a detachment of the Guards, who as yet had got no orders to march, and were somewhat surprised to learn the forward movement. Ten minutes' riding brought me to the angle of the wood, whence I wrote a few lines to my host of the Belle Vue, desiring him to send Mike after me with my horses and my kit. The night was cold, dark, and threatening; the wind howled with a low and wailing cry through the dark pine-trees; and as I stood alone and in solitude, I had time to think of the eventful hours before me, and of that field which ere long was to witness the triumph or the downfall of my country's arms. The road which led through the forest of Soignies caught an additional gloom from the dark, dense woods around. The faint moon only showed at intervals; and a lowering sky, without a single star, stretched above us. It was an awful and a solemn thing to hear the deep and thundering roll of that mighty column, awakening the echoes of the silent forest as they went. So hurried was the movement that we had scarcely any artillery, and that of the lightest calibre; but the clash and clank of the cavalry, the heavy, monotonous tramp of infantry were there; and as division followed after division, staff officers rode hurriedly to and fro, pressing the eager troops still on.

"Move up there, Ninety-fifth. Ah, Forty-second, we 've work before us!" said Picton, as he rode up to the head of his brigade. The air of depression which usually sat upon his careworn features now changed for a light and laughing look, while his voice was softened and subdued into a low and pleasing tone. Although it was midsummer, the roads were heavy and deep with mud. For some weeks previously the weather had been rainy; and this, added to the haste and discomfort of the night march, considerably increased the fatigue of the troops. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, not a murmur nor complaint was heard on any side.

"I 'm unco glad to get a blink o' them, onyhow," said a tall, raw-boned sergeant, who marched beside me.

"Faith, and may be you won't be over pleased at the expression of their faces, when you see them," said Mike, whose satisfaction at the prospect before him was still as great as that of any other amidst the thousands there.

The day was slowly breaking, as a Prussian officer, splashed and covered with foam, came galloping up at full speed past us. While I was yet conjecturing what might be the intelligence he brought, Power rode up to my side.

"We 're in for it, Charley," said he. "The whole French army are in march; and Blucher's aide-de-camp, who has arrived, gives the number at one hundred and fifty thousand men. The Prussians are drawn up between St. Amand and Sombref, and the Nassau and Dutch troops are at Quatre Bras, both expecting to be attacked."

"Quatre Bras was the original rallying spot for our troops, was it not?" said I.

"Yes, yes. It is that we 're now marching upon; but our Prussian friend seems to think we shall arrive too late. Strong French corps are already at Fresnes, under the command, it is said, of Marshal Ney."

The great object of the British commander-in-chief was to arrive at Quatre Bras in sufficient time to effect his junction with Blucher before a battle should be fought. To effect this no exertion was spared: efforts almost superhuman were made; for, however prepared for a forward movement, it was impossible to have anticipated anything until the intentions of Napoleon became clearly manifest. While Nivelles and Charleroi were exposed to him on one side, Namur lay open on the other; and he could either march upon Brussels, by Mons or Halle, or, as he subsequently attempted, by Quatre Bras and Waterloo. No sooner, however, were his intentions unmasked, and the line of his operations manifested, than Lord Wellington, with an energy equal to the mighty occasion that demanded it, poured down with the whole force under his command to meet him.

The march was a most distressing one; upward of three-and-twenty miles, with deep and cut-up roads, in hot, oppressive weather, in a country almost destitute of water. Still the troops pressed forward, and by noon came within hearing of the heavy cannonade in front, which indicated the situation of the battle. From this time aide-de-camp followed aide-de-camp in quick succession, who, from their scared looks and hurried gestures, seemed to bode but ill-fortune to the cause we cared for. What the precise situation of the rival armies might be we knew not; but we heard the French were in overwhelming numbers; that the Dutch troops had abandoned their position; the Hanoverians being driven back, the Duke of Brunswick — the brave sovereign of a gallant people — fell charging at the head of his black hussars. From one phrase which constantly met our ears, it seemed that the Bois de Bossu was the key of the position. This had been won and lost repeatedly by both sides; and as we neared the battle-field a despatch hurriedly announced to Picton the importance of at once recovering this contested point. The Ninety-fifth were ordered up to the attack. Scarcely was the word given, when fatigue, thirst, and exhaustion were forgotten; with one cheer the gallant regiment formed into line, and advanced upon the wood. Meanwhile the Highland Brigade moved down towards the right; the Royals and the Twenty-eighth debouched upon the left of the road; and in less than half an hour after our arrival our whole force was in action.

There is something appalling, to the bravest army, in coming up to battle at the time that an overwhelming and conquering foe are carrying victory triumphantly before them: such was our position at Quatre Bras. Bravely and gloriously as the forces of the Prince of Orange fought, the day, however, was not theirs. The Bois de Bossu, which opened to the enemy the road to Brussels, was held by their tirailleurs; the valley to the right was rode over by their mounted squadrons, who with lance and sabre carried all before them; their dark columns pressed steadily on; and a death-dealing artillery swept the allied ranks from flank to flank Such was the field when the British arrived, and throwing themselves into squares, opposed their unaided force to the dreadful charges of the enemy. The batteries showered down their storms of grape; Milhaud's Heavy Dragoons, assisted by crowds of lancers, rushed upon the squares, but they stood unbroken and undaunted, as sometimes upon three sides of their position the infuriated horsemen of the enemy came down. Once, and once only, were the French successful; the 42d, who were stationed amidst tall corn-fields, were surrounded with cavalry before they knew it. The word was given to form square; the Lancers were already among them, and fighting back to back, the gallant Highlanders met the foe. Fresh numbers poured down upon them, and already half the regiment was disabled and their colonel killed. These brave fellows were rescued by the 44th, who, throwing in a withering volley, fixed bayonets and charged. Meanwhile the 95th had won and lost the wood, which, now in the possession of the French tirailleurs, threatened to turn the left of our position. It was at this time that a body of cavalry were seen standing to the left of the Enghien road, as if in observation. An officer sent forward to reconnoitre, returned with the intelligence that they were British troops, for he had seen their red uniforms.

"I can't think it, sir," said Picton. "It is hardly possible that any regiment from Enghien could have arrived already. Ride forward, O'Malley, and if they be our fellows, let them carry that height yonder; there are two guns there cutting the 92d to pieces."

I put spurs to my horse, cleared the road at once, and dashing across the open space to the left of the wood, rode on in the direction of the horsemen. When I came within the distance of three hundred yards I examined them with my glass, and could plainly detect the scarlet coats and bright helmets. "Ha," thought I, "the 1st Dragoon Guards, no doubt." Muttering to myself thus much, I galloped straight on; and waving my hand as I came near, announced that I was the bearer of an order. Scarcely had I done so, when four horsemen, dashing spurs into their steeds, plunged hastily out from the line, and before I could speak, surrounded me. While the foremost called out, as he flourished his sabre above his head, "Rendez-vous!" At the same moment I was seized on each side, and led back a captive into the hands of the enemy.

"We guess your mistake, Capitaine," said the French officer before whom I was brought. "We are the regiment of Berg, and our scarlet uniform cost us dearly enough yesterday."

This allusion, I afterwards learned, was in reference to a charge by a cuirassier regiment, which, in mistaking them for English, poured a volley into them, and killed and wounded about twenty of their number.

CHAPTER LII.

QUATRE BRAS.

Those who have visited the field of Quatre Bras will remember that on the left of the high road, and nearly at the extremity of the Bois de Bossu, stands a large Flemish farmhouse, whose high pitched roof, pointed gables, and quaint, old-fashioned chimneys, remind one of the architecture so frequently seen in Tenier's pictures. The house, which, with its dependencies of stables, granaries, and out-houses, resembles a little village, is surrounded by a large, straggling orchard of aged fruit-trees, through which the approach from the high road leads. The interior of this quaint dwelling, like all those of its class, is only remarkable for a succession of small, dark, low-ceiled rooms, leading one into another; their gloomy aspect increased by the dark oak furniture, the heavy armories, and old-fashioned presses, carved in the grotesque taste of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Those who visit it now may mark the trace of cannon-shot here and there through the building; more than one deep crack will attest the force of the dread artillery. Still the traveller will feel struck with the rural peace and quietude of the scene; the speckled oxen that stand lowing in the deep meadows; the splash of the silvery trout as he sports in the bright stream that ripples along over its gravelly bed; the cawing of the old rooks in the tall beech-trees; but more than all, the happy laugh of children, — speak of the spot as one of retired and tranquil beauty; yet when my eyes oped upon it on the morning of the 17th of June, the scene presented features of a widely different interest. The day was breaking as the deep, full sound of the French bugles announced the reveille. Forgetful of where I was, I sprang from my bed and rushed to the window; the prospect before me at once recalled me to my recollection, and I remembered that I was a prisoner. The exciting events around left me but little time and as little inclination to think over my old misfortunes; and I watched, with all the interest of a soldier, the movement of the French troops in the orchard beneath. A squadron of dragoons, who seemed to have passed the night beside their horses, lay stretched or seated in all the picturesque groupings of a bivouac,—some already up and stirring; others leaned half listlessly upon their elbows, and looked about as if unwilling to believe the night was over; and some, stretched in deep slumber, woke not with the noise and tumult around them. The room in which I was confined looked out upon the road to Charleroi; I could therefore see the British troops; and as the French army had fallen back during the night, only an advanced guard maintaining the position, I was left to my unaided conjectures as to the fortune of the preceding day of battle. What a period of anxiety and agitation was that morning to me; what would I not have given to learn the result of the action since the moment of my capture! Stubborn as our resistance had been, we were evidently getting the worst of it; and if the Guards had not arrived in time, I knew we must have been beaten.

I walked up and down my narrow room, tortured and agonized by my doubts, now stopping to reason over the possibilities of success, now looking from the window to try if, in the gesture and bearing of those without, I could conjecture anything that passed. Too well I knew the vaunting character of the French soldier, in defeat as in victory, to put much confidence in their bearing. While, however, I watched them with an eager eye, I heard the tramp of horsemen coming along the paved causeway. From the moment my ear caught the sound to that of their arrival at the gate of the orchard, but few minutes elapsed; their pace was indeed a severe one, and as they galloped through the narrow path that led to the farm-house, they never drew rein till they reached the porch. The party consisted of about a dozen persons whose plumed hats bespoke them staff officers; but their uniforms were concealed beneath their great-coats. As they came along the picket sprang to their feet, and the guard at the door beneath presented arms. This left no doubt upon my mind that some officer of rank was among them, and as I knew that Ney himself commanded on the preceding day, I thought it might be he. The sound of voices beneath informed me that the party occupied the room under that in which I was, and although I listened attentively I could hear nothing but the confused murmur of persons conversing together without detecting even a word. My thoughts now fell into another channel, and as I ruminated over my old position, I heard the noise of the sentry at my door as he brought his musket to the shoulder, and the next moment an officer in the uniform of the Chasseurs of the Guard entered. Bowing politely as he advanced to the middle of the room, he addressed me thus: —

"You speak French, sir?" and as I replied in the affirmative, continued: —

"Will you, then, have the goodness to follow me this way?"

Although burning with anxiety to learn what had taken place, yet somehow I could not bring myself to ask the question. A secret pride mingled with my fear that all had not gone well with us, and I durst not expose myself to hear of our defeat from the lips of an enemy. I had barely time to ask into whose presence I was about to be ushered, when with a slight smile of a strange meaning, he opened the door and introduced me into the saloon. Although I had seen at least twelve or fourteen horsemen arrive, there were but three persons in the room as I entered. One of these, who sat writing at a small table near the window, never lifted his head on my entrance, but continued assiduously his occupation. Another, a tall, fine-looking man of some sixty years or upward, whose high, bald forehead and drooping mustache, white as snow, looked in every way the old soldier of the empire, stood leaning upon his sabre; while the third, whose stature, somewhat below the middle size, was yet cast in a strong and muscular mould, stood with his back to the fire, holding on his arms the skirts of a gray surtout which he wore over his uniform; his legs were cased in the tall *bottes à l'écuyère* worn by the *chasseur à cheval*, and on his head a low cocked hat, without plume or feather, completed his costume. There was something which, at the very moment of my entrance, struck me as uncommon in his air and bearing, so much so that when my eyes had once rested on his pale but placid countenance, his regular, handsome, but somewhat stern features, I totally forgot the presence of the others and looked only at him.

"What 's your rank, sir?" said he, hurriedly, and with a tone which bespoke command.

"I have none at present, save —"

"Why do you wear your epaulettes then, sir?" said he, harshly, while from his impatient look, and hurried gesture, I saw that he put no faith in my reply.

"I am an aide-de-camp to General Picton, but without regimental rank."

"What was the British force under arms yesterday?"

"I do not feel at liberty to give you any information as to the number or the movements of our army."

"*Diantre! Diantre!*" said he, slapping his boot with his horsewhip, "do you know what you 've been saying there, eh? Cambronne, you heard him, did you?"

"Yes, Sire, and if your Majesty would permit me to deal with him, I would have his information, if he possess any, and that ere long, too."

"Eh, *gaillard*," said he, laughing, as he pinched the old general's ear in jest, "I believe you, with all my heart."

The full truth flashed upon my mind. I was in presence of the Emperor himself. As, however, up to this moment I was unconscious of his presence, I resolved now to affect ignorance of it throughout.

"Had you despatches, sir?" said he, turning towards me with a look of stern severity. "Were any despatches found upon him when he was taken?" This latter question was directed to the aide-de-camp who introduced me, and who still remained at the door.

"No, Sire, nothing was found upon him except this locket."

As he said these words he placed in Napoleon's hands the keepsake which St. Croix had left with me years before in Spain, and which, as the reader may remember, was a miniature of the Empress Josephine.

The moment the Emperor threw his eyes upon it, the flush which excitement had called into his cheek disappeared at once. He became pale as death, his very lips as bloodless as his wan cheek.

"Leave me, Lefebvre; leave me, Cambronne, for a moment. I will speak with this gentleman alone."

As the door closed upon them he leaned his arm upon the mantel-piece, and with his head sunk upon his bosom, remained some moments without speaking.

"Augure sinistre!" muttered he within his teeth, as his piercing gaze was riveted upon the picture before him. "Voilà la troisième fois peut-être la dernière." Then suddenly rousing himself, he advanced close to me, and seizing me by the arm with a grasp like iron, inquired: —

"How came you by this picture? The truth, sir; mark me, the truth!"

Without showing any sign of feeling hurt at the insinuation of this question, I detailed, in as few words as I could, the circumstance by which the locket became mine. Long before I had concluded, however, I could mark that his attention flagged, and finally wandered far away from the matter before him.

"Why will you not give me the information I look for? I seek for no breach of faith. The campaign is all but over. The Prussians were beaten at Ligny, their army routed, their artillery captured, ten thousand prisoners taken. Your troops and the Dutch were conquered yesterday, and they are in full retreat on Brussels. By tomorrow evening I shall date my bulletin from the palace at Laeken. Antwerp will be in my possession within twenty-four hours. Namur is already mine. Cambronne, Lefebvre," cried he, "cet homme-là n'en sait rien," pointing to me as he spoke; "let us see the other." With this he motioned slightly with his hand as a sign for me to withdraw, and the next moment I was once more in the solitude of my prison-room, thinking over the singular interview I had just had with the great Emperor.

How anxiously pass the hours of one who, deprived of other means of information, is left to form his conjectures by some passing object or some chance murmur. The things which, in the ordinary course of life, are passed by unnoticed and unregarded, are now matters of moment, — with what scrutiny he examines the features of those whom he dare not question; with what patient ear he listens to each passing word. Thus to me, a prisoner, the hours went by tardily yet anxiously; no sabre clanked; no war-horse neighed; no heavy-booted cuirassier tramped in the courtyard beneath my window, without setting a hundred conjectures afloat as to what was about to happen. For some time there had been a considerable noise and bustle in and about the dwelling. Horsemen came and went continually. The sounds of galloping could be heard along the paved causeway; then the challenge of the sentry at the gate; then the nearer tread of approaching steps, and many voices speaking together, would seem to indicate that some messenger had arrived with despatches. At length all these sounds became hushed and still. No longer were the voices heard; and except the measured tread of the heavy cuirassier, as he paced on the flags beneath, nothing was to be heard. My state of suspense, doubly greater now than when the noise and tumult suggested food for conjecture, continued till towards noon, when a soldier in undress brought me some breakfast, and told me to prepare speedily for the road.

Scarcely had he left the room, when the rumbling noise of wagons was heard below, and a train of artillery carts moved into the little courtyard loaded with wounded men. It was a sad and frightful sight to see these poor fellows, as, crammed side by side in the straw of the *charrette*, they lay, their ghastly wounds opening with every motion of the wagon, while their wan, pale faces were convulsed with agony and suffering. Of every rank, from the sous-lieutenant to the humble soldier, from every arm of the service, from the heavy cuirassier of the guard to the light and intrepid tirailleur, they were there. I well remember one, an artillery-man of the guard, who, as they lifted him forth from the cart, presented the horrifying spectacle of one both of whose legs had been carried away by a cannon-shot. Pale, cold, and corpse-like, he lay in their arms; his head lay heavily to one side, his arms fell passively as in death. It was at this moment a troop of lancers, the advanced guard of D'Erlon's Division, came trotting up the road; the cry of "Vive l'Empereur!" burst from them as they approached; its echo rang within the walls of the farm-house, when suddenly the dying man, as though some magic touch had called him back to life and vigor, sprang up erect between his bearers, his filmy eye flashing fire, a burning spot of red coloring his bloodless cheek. He cast one wild and hurried look around him, like one called back from death to look upon the living; and as he raised his blood-stained hand above his head, shouted, in a heart-piercing cry, "Vive l'Empereur!" The effort was his last. It was the expiring tribute of allegiance to the chief he adored. The blood spouted in cataracts from his half-closed wounds, a convulsive spasm worked through his frame, his eyes rolled fearfully, as his outstretched hands seemed striving to clutch some object before them, and he was dead. Fresh arrivals of wounded continued to pour in; and now I thought I could detect at intervals the distant noise of a cannonade. The wind, however, was from the southward, and the sounds were too indistinct to be relied on.

"Allons, allons, mon cher!" said a rough but good-humored looking fellow, as he strode into my room. He was the quartermaster of Milhaud's Dragoons, under whose care I was now placed, and came to inform me that we were to set out immediately.

Monsieur Bonnard was a character in his way; and if it were not so near the conclusion of my history, I should like to present him to my readers. As it is, I shall merely say he was a thorough specimen of one class of his countrymen, — a loud talker, a louder swearer, a vaporing, boasting, overbearing, good-natured, and even soft-hearted fellow, who firmly believed that Frenchmen were the climax of the species, and Napoleon the climax of Frenchmen. Being a great *bavard*, he speedily told me all that had taken place during the last two days. From him I learned that the Prussians had really been beaten at Ligny, and had fallen back, he knew not where. They were, however, he said, hotly pursued by Grouchy, with thirty-five thousand men, while the Emperor himself was now following the British and Dutch armies with seventy thousand more.

"You see," continued he, "l'affaire est faite! Who can resist the Emperor?"

These were sad tidings for me; and although I did not place implicit confidence in my informant, I had still my fears that much of what he said was true.

"And the British, now," said I, "what direction have they taken?"

"Bah, they 're in retreat on Brussels, and will probably capitulate to-morrow."

"Capitulate!"

"Oui, oui; ne vous fâchez pas, camarade," said he, laughing. "What could you do against Napoleon? You did not expect tc beat him, surely? But come, we must move on; I have my orders to bring you to Planchenoit this evening, and our horses are tired enough already."

"Mine, methinks, should be fresh," said I.

"*Parbleu, mon!*" replied he; "he has twice made the journey to Fresnes this morning with despatches for Marshal Ney; the Emperor is enraged with the marshal for having retreated last night, having the wood in his possession; he says he should have waited till daybreak, and then fallen upon your retreating columns. As it is, you are getting away without much loss. *Sacristie*, that was a fine charge!" These last words he muttered to himself, adding, between his teeth, "Sixty-four killed and wounded."

"What was that? Who were they?" said I.

"Our fellows," replied he, frankly; "the Emperor ordered up two twelve-pounders, and eight squadrons of lancers; they fell upon your light dragoons in a narrow part of the high road. But suddenly we heard a noise in front; your hussars fell back, and a column of your heavy dragoons came thundering down upon us. *Parbleu!* they swept over us as if we were broken infantry; and there! there!" said he, pointing to the courtyard, from whence the groans of the wounded still rose,—"there are the fruits of that terrible charge."

I could not restrain an outbreak of triumphant pleasure at this gallant feat of my countrymen.

"Yes, yes," said the honest quartermaster; "it was a fine thing; but a heavy reckoning is at hand. But come, now, let us take the road."

In a few moments more I found myself seated upon a heavy Norman horse, whose lumbering demi-peak saddle was nearly cleft in two by a sabre-cut.

"Ay, ay," said Monsieur Bonnard, as he saw my eye fixed on the spot, "it was one of your fellows did that; and the same cut clove poor Pierre from the neck to the seat."

"I hope," said I, laughing, "the saddle may not prove an unlucky one."

"No, no," said the Frenchman, seriously; "it has paid its debt to fate."

As we pressed on our road, which, broken by the heavy guns, and ploughed up in many places by the artillery, was nearly impassable, we could distinctly hear from time to time the distant boom of the large guns, as the retiring and pursuing armies replied to each other; while behind us, but still a long way off, a dark mass appeared on the horizon: they were the advancing columns of Ney's Division.

"Have the troops come in contact more than once this morning?"

"Not closely," said the quartermaster; "the armies have kept a respectful distance; they were like nothing I can think of," said the figurative Frenchman, "except two hideous serpents wallowing in mire, and vomiting at each other whole rivers of fire and flame."

As we approached Planchenoit, we came up to the rear-guard of the French army; from them we learned that Ney's Division, consisting of the Eighth Corps, had joined the Emperor; that the British were still in retreat, but that nothing of any importance had occurred between the rival armies, the French merely firing their heavy guns from time to time to ascertain by the reply the position of the retreating forces. The rain poured down in torrents; gusts of cold and stormy wind swept across the wide plains, or moaned sorrowfully through the dense forest. As I rode on by the side of my companion, I could not help remarking how little the effects of a fatiguing march and unfavorable weather were apparent on those around me. The spirit of excited gayety pervaded every rank; and unlike the stern features which the discipline of our service enforces, the French soldiers were talking, laughing and even singing, as they marched; the canteens passed freely from hand to hand, and jests and toasts flew from front to rear along the dark columns; many carried their loaves of dark rye-bread on the tops of their bayonets; and to look upon that noisy and tumultuous mass as they poured along, it would have needed a practised eye to believe them the most disciplined of European armies.

The sun was just setting, as mounting a ridge of high land beside the high road, my companion pointed with his finger to a small farm-house, which, standing alone in the plain, commands an extensive view on every side of it.

"There," said he, — "there is the *quartier général;* the Emperor sleeps there to-night. The King of Holland will afford him a bed to-morrow night."

The dark shadows of the coming night were rapidly falling as I strained my eyes to trace the British position. A hollow, rumbling sound announced the movement of artillery in our front.

"What is it, Arnotte?" said the quartermaster to a dragoon officer who rode past.

"It is nothing," replied the other, laughing, "but a *ruse* of the Emperor. He wishes to ascertain if the enemy are in force, or if we have only a strong rear-guard before us."

As he spoke fifteen heavy guns opened there fire, and the still air reverberated with a loud thunder. The sound had not died away, the very smoke lay yet heavily upon the moist earth, when forty pieces of British cannon rang out their answer, and the very plain trembled beneath the shock.

"Ha, they are there, then!" exclaimed the dragoon, as his eyes flashed with ecstasy. "Look! see! the artillery are limbering up already. The Emperor is satisfied."

And so it was. A dark column of twelve hundred horse that accompanied the guns into the plain, now wheeled slowly round, and wound their long track far away to the right. The rain fell in torrents; the wind was hushed; and as the night fell in darkness, the columns moved severally to their destinations. The bivouacs were formed; the watch-fires were lighted; and seventy thousand men and two hundred pieces of cannon occupied the heights of Planchenoit.

"My orders are to bring you to La Caillon," said the quartermaster; "and if you only can spur your jaded horse into a trot, we shall soon reach it."

About a hundred yards from the little farm-house, stood a small cottage of a peasant. Here some officers of Marshal Soult's staff had taken up their quarters; and thither my guide now bent his steps.

"Comment, Bonnard!" said an aide-de-camp, as we rode up. "Another prisoner? *Sacrebleu!* We shall have the whole British staff among us. You are in better luck than your countryman, the general, I hope," said the aide-de-camp. "His is a sad affair; and I 'm sorry for it, too. He 's a fine, soldier-like looking fellow."

"Pray, what has happened?" said I. "To what do you allude?"

"Merely to one of your people who has just been taken with some letters and papers of Bourmont's in his possession. The Emperor is in no very amicable humor towards the traitor, and resolves to pay off some part of his debt on his British correspondent."

"How cruel! How unjust!"

"Why, yes, it is hard, I confess, to be shot for the fault of another. Mais, que voulez-vous?"

"And when is this atrocious act to take place?"

"By daybreak to-morrow," said he, bowing, as he turned towards the hut. "Meanwhile, let me counsel you, if you would not make another in the party, to reserve your indignation for your return to England."

"Come along," said the quartermaster; "I find they have got quarters for you in the granary of the farm. I 'll not forget you at supper-time."

So saying, he gave his horse to an orderly, and led me by a little path to a back entrance of the dwelling. Had I time or inclination for such a scene, I might have lingered long to gaze at the spectacle before me. The guard held their bivouac around the quarters of the Emperor; and here, beside the watch-fires, sat the bronzed and scarred veterans who had braved every death and danger, from the Pyramids to the Kremlin. On every side I heard the names of those whom history has already consigned to immortality; and as the fitful blaze of a wood-fire flashed from within the house, I could mark the figure of one who, with his hands behind his back, walked leisurely to and fro, his head leaned a little forward as though in deep thought; but as the light fell upon his pale and placid features, there was nothing there to indicate the stormy strife of hope and fear that raged beneath. From the rapid survey I took around I was roused by an officer, who, saluting me, politely desired me to follow him. We mounted a flight of stone steps which, outside the wall of the building, led to the upper story of a large but ruined granary. Here a sentry was posted, who permitting us to pass forward, I found myself in a small, mean-looking apartment, whose few articles of coarse furniture were dimly lighted by the feeble glimmer of a lamp. At the farther end of the room sat a man wrapped in a large blue cavalry cloak, whose face, covered with his hands as he bent downward, was completely concealed from view. The noise of the opening door did not appear to arouse him, nor did he notice my approach. As I entered, a faint sigh broke from him, as he turned his back upon the light; but he spoke not a word.

I sat for some time in silence, unwilling to obtrude myself upon the sorrows of one to whom I was unknown; and as I walked up and down the gloomy chamber, my thoughts became riveted so completely upon my own fortunes that I ceased to remember my fellow-prisoner. The hours passed thus lazily along, when the door suddenly opened, and an officer in the dress of a lancer of the guard stood for an instant before me, and then, springing forward, clasped me by both hands, and called out, —

"Charles, mon ami, c' est bien toi?"

The voice recalled to my recollections what his features, altered by time and years, had failed to do. It was Jules St. Croix, my former prisoner in the Peninsula. I cannot paint the delight with which I saw him again; his presence now, while it brought back the memory of some of my happiest days, also assured me that I was not friendless.

His visit was a brief one, for he was in attendance on Marshal Lobau's staff. In the few minutes, however, of his stay, he said, —

"I have a debt to pay, Charles, and have come to discharge it. In an hour hence I shall leave this with despatches for the left of our line. Before I go, I 'll come here with two or three others, as it were, to wish you a good-night. I 'll take care to carry a second cloak and a foraging cap; I 'll provide a fast horse; you shall accompany us for some distance. I 'll see you safe across our pickets; for the rest, you must trust to yourself. C'est arrangé, n' est-ce-pas?"

One firm grasp of his hand, to which I responded by another, followed, and he was gone.

Everything concurred to show me that a tremendous battle must ensue on the morrow, if the British forces but held their position. It was, then, with a feeling of excitement approaching to madness that I saw my liberty before me; that once more I should join in the bold charge and the rude shock of arms, hear the wild cry of my gallant countrymen, and either live to triumph with them in victory, or wait not to witness our defeat. Fast flew my hopes, as with increasing impatience I waited St. Croix's coming, and with anxious heart listened to every sound upon the stairs which might indicate his approach. At length he came. I heard the gay and laughing voices of his companions as they came along; the door opened, and affecting the familiarity of old acquaintance to deceive the sentry, they all shook me by the hand and spoke in terms of intimacy.

"Labedoyère is below," said St. Croix, in a whisper; "you must wait here a few moments longer, and I 'll return for you; put on the cloak and cap, and speak not a word as you pass out. The sentry will suppose that one of our party has remained behind; for I shall call out as if speaking to him, as I leave the room."

The voice of an officer calling in tones of impatience for the party to come down, cut short the interview ; and again assuring me of their determination to stand by me, they left the chamber and descended into the court. Scarcely had the door closed behind them, when my fellow-prisoner, whom I had totally forgotten, sprang on his legs and came towards me. His figure screening the lamplight as he stood, prevented my recognizing his features, but the first tones of his voice told me who he was.

"Stay, sir," cried he, as he placed his hand upon my arm ; "I have overheard your project. In an hour hence you will be free. Can you — will you perform a service for one who will esteem it not the less that it will be the last that man can render him ? The few lines which I have written here with my pencil are for my daughter."

I could bear no more, and called out in a voice broken as his own, —

"Oh, be not deceived, sir. Will you, even in an hour like this, accept a service from one whom you have banished from your house ?"

The old man started as I spoke ; his hand trembled till it shook my very arm, and after a pause and with an effort to seem calm and collected, he added, —

"My hours are few. Some despatches of General Bourmont with which the duke intrusted me were found in my possession. My sentence is a hurried one, and it is death. By to-morrow's sunrise — "

"Stay, stay !" said I. "You shall escape ; my life is in no danger. I have, as you see, even friends among the staff. Besides, I have done nothing to compromise or endanger my position."

"No, sir," said he, sternly, "I will not act such a part as this. The tears you have seen in these old eyes are not for myself. I fear not death. Better it were it should have come upon the field of glorious battle ; but as it is, my soldier's honor is intact, untainted."

"You refuse the service on account of him who proffers it," said I, as I fell heavily upon a seat, my head bowed upon my bosom.

"Not so, not so, my boy," replied he, kindly. "The near approach of death, like the fading light of day, gives us a longer and a clearer view before us. I feel that I have wronged you; that I have imputed to you the errors of others; but, believe me, if I have wronged you, I have punished my own heart; for, Charles, I have loved you like a son."

"Then prove it," said I, "and let me act towards you as towards a father. You will not? You refuse me still? Then, by Heaven, I remain to share your fate! I well know the temper of him who has sentenced you, and that, by one word of mine, my destiny is sealed forever."

"No, no, boy! This is but rash and insane folly. Another year or two, nay, perhaps a few months more, and in the common course of Nature I had ceased to be; but you, with youth, with fortune, and with hope — "

"Oh, not with hope!" said I, in a voice of agony.

"Nay, say not so," replied he, calmly, while a sickly smile played sadly over his face; "you will give this letter to my daughter, you will tell her that we parted as friends should part; and if after that, when time shall have smoothed down her grief, and her sorrow be rather a dark dream of the past than a present suffering, — if then you love her, and if — "

"Oh, tempt me not thus!" said I, as the warm tears gushed from my eyes. "Lead me not thus astray from what my honor tells me I should do. Hark! They are coming already. I hear the clank of their sabres; they are mounting the steps; not a moment is to be lost! Do you refuse me still?"

"I do," replied he, firmly; "I am resolved to bide my fate."

"Then so do I," cried I, as folding my arms, I sat down beside the window, determined on my course.

"Charley, Charley," said he, stooping over me, "my friend, my last hope, the protector of my child — "

"I will not go," said I, in a hollow whisper.

Already they were at the door; I heard their voices as they challenged the sentry; I heard his musket as he raised it to his shoulder. The thought flashed across me. I jumped up, and throwing the loose mantle of the French dragoon around him, and replacing his own with the foraging cap of St. Croix, I sprang into a corner of the room, and seating myself so as to conceal my face, waited the result. The door opened, the party entered laughing and talking together.

"Come, Eugène," said one, taking Sir George by the arm, "you have spent long enough time here to learn the English language. We shall be late at the outpost. Messieurs les Anglais, good-night, good-night!"

This was repeated by the others as they passed out with Sir George Dashwood among them, who, seeing that my determination was not to be shaken, and that any demur on his part must necessarily compromise both, yielded to a *coup-de-main* what he never would have consented to from an appeal to his reason. The door closed; their steps died away in the distance. Again a faint sound struck my ear; it was the challenge of the sentry beneath, and I heard the tramp of horses' feet. All was still, and in a burst of heartfelt gratitude I sank upon my knees, and thanked God that he was safe.

So soundly did I sleep, that not before I was shaken several times by the shoulder could I awake on the following morning.

"I thought there were two prisoners here," said a gruff voice, as an old mustached-looking veteran cast a searching look about the room. "However, we shall have enough of them before sunset. Get — get up; Monsieur le Duc de Dalmatie desires some information you can give him."

As he said this, he led me from the room; and descending the flight of stone steps, we entered the courtyard. It was but four o'clock, the rain still falling in torrents, yet every one was up and stirring.

"Mount this horse," said my gruff friend, "and come with me towards the left; the marshal has already gone forward."

The heavy mist of the morning, darkened by the lowering clouds which almost rested on the earth, prevented our seeing above a hundred yards before us; but the hazy light of the watch-fires showed me the extent of the French position, as it stretched away along the ridge towards the Halle road. We rode forward at a trot, but in the deep clayey soil we sank at each moment to our horses' fetlocks. I turned my head as I heard the tramp and splash of horsemen behind, and perceived that I was followed by two dragoons, who, with their carbines on the rest, kept their eyes steadily upon me to prevent any chance of escape. In a slight hollow of the ground before us stood a number of horsemen, who conversed together in a low tone as we came up.

"There, that is the marshal," said my companion, in a whisper, as we joined the party.

"Yes, Monsieur le Duc," said an engineer colonel, who stood beside Soult's horse with a colored plan in his hand, — "yes, that is the Château de Goumont, yonder. It is, as you perceive, completely covered by the rising ground marked here. They will doubtless place a strong artillery force in this quarter."

"Ah, who is this?" said the marshal, turning his eyes suddenly upon me, and then casting a look of displeasure around him, lest I should have overheard any portion of their conversation. "You are deficient in cavalry, it would appear, sir," said he to me.

"You must feel, Monsieur le Duc," said I, calmly, "how impossible it is for me, as a man of honor and a soldier, to afford you any information as to the army I belong to."

"I do not see that, sir. You are a prisoner in our hands; your treatment, your fortune, your very life depends on us. Besides, sir, when French officers fall into the power of your people, I have heard they meet with no very ceremonious treatment."

"Those who say so, say falsely," said I, "and wrong both your countrymen and mine. In any case —"

"The Guards are an untried force in your service," said he, with a mixture of inquiry and assertion.

I replied not a word.

"You must see, sir," continued he, "that all the chances are against you. The Prussians beaten, the Dutch discouraged, the Belgians only waiting for victory to incline to our standard, to desert your ranks and pass over to ours; while your troops, scarcely forty thousand, — nay, I might say, not more than thirty-five thousand. Is it not so?"

Here was another question so insidiously conveyed that even a change of feature on my part might have given the answer. A half smile, however, and a slight bow was all my reply; while Soult muttered something between his teeth, which called forth a laugh from those around him.

"You may retire, sir, a little," said he, dryly, to me.

Not sorry to be freed from the awkwardness of my position, I fell back to the little rising ground behind. Although the rain poured down without ceasing, the rising sun dispelled, in part, the heavy vapor, and by degrees different portions of the wide plain presented themselves to view; and as the dense masses of fog moved slowly along, I could detect, but still faintly, the outline of the large, irregular building which I had heard them call the Château de Goumont, and from whence I could hear the clank of masonry, as, at intervals, the wind bore the sounds towards me. These were the sappers piercing the walls for musketry; and this I could now perceive was looked upon as a position of no small importance. Surrounded by a straggling orchard of aged fruit-trees, the château lay some hundred yards in advance of the British line, commanded by two eminences, — one of which, in the possession of the French, was already occupied by a park of eleven guns; of the other I knew nothing, except the passing glance I had obtained of its position on the map. The Second Corps, under Jerome Bonaparte, with Foy and Kellermann's Brigade of light artillery, stretched behind us. On the right of these came D'Erlon's Corps, extending to a small wood, which my companion told me was Frischermont; while Lobau's Division was stationed to the extreme right towards St. Lambert, to maintain the communication with Grouchy at Wavre, or, if need be, to repel the advance of the Prussians and prevent their junction with the Anglo-Dutch army. The Imperial Guard, with the cavalry, formed the reserve. Such was, in substance, the information given me by my guide, who seemed to expatiate with pleasure over the magnificent array of battle, while he felt a pride in displaying his knowledge of the various divisions and their leaders.

"I see the marshal moving towards the right," said he; "we had better follow him."

It was now about eight o'clock as from the extremity of the line I could see a party of horsemen advancing at a sharp canter.

"That must be Ney," said my companion. "See how rashly he approaches the English lines!"

And so it was. The party in question rode fearlessly down the slope, and did not halt until they reached within about three hundred yards of what appeared a ruined church.

"What is that building yonder?"

"That — that," replied he, after a moment's thought, — "that must be La Haye Sainte; and yonder, to the right of it, is the road to Brussels. There, look now! Your people are in motion. See, a column is moving towards the right, and the cavalry are defiling on the other side of the road! I was mistaken, that cannot be Ney. *Sacre Dieu!* it was the Emperor himself, and here he comes."

As he spoke, the party galloped forward and pulled up short within a few yards of where we stood.

"Ha!" cried he, as his sharp glance fell upon me, "there is my taciturn friend of Quatre Bras. You see, sir, I can dispense with your assistance now; the chess-board is before me;" and then added, in a tone he intended not to be overheard, "Everything depends on Grouchy."

"Well, Haxo," he called out to an officer who galloped up, *chapeau* in hand, "what say you? Are they intrenched in that position?"

"No, Sire, the ground is open, and in two hours more will be firm enough for the guns to manœuvre."

"Now, then, for breakfast," said Napoleon, as with an easy and tranquil smile he turned his horse's head and cantered gently up the heights towards La Belle Alliance. As he approached the lines, the cry of "Vive l' Empereur!" burst forth. Regiment after regiment took it up; and from the distant wood of Frischermont to the far left beside Merke-braine, the shout resounded. So sudden, so simultaneous the outbreak, that he himself, accustomed as he well was to the enthusiasm of his army, seemed as he reined in his horse, and looked with proud and elated eye upon the countless thousands, astounded and amazed. He lifted with slow and graceful action his unplumed hat above his head, and while he bowed that proud front before which kings have trembled, the acclamation burst forth anew, and rent the very air.

At this moment the sun shone brilliantly from out the dark clouds, and flashed upon the shining blades and glistening bayonets along the line. A dark and lowering shadow hung gloomily over the British position, while the French sparkled and glittered in the sunbeams. His quick glance passed with lightning speed from one to the other; and I thought that, in his look, upturned to heaven, I could detect the flitting thought which bade him hope it was an augury. The bands of the Imperial Guard burst forth in joyous and triumphant strains; and amidst the still repeated cries of "L' Empereur! l' Empereur!" he rode slowly along towards La Belle Alliance.

CHAPTER LIII.

WATERLOO.

Napoleon's first intention was to open the battle by an attack upon the extreme right; but Ney, who returned from an observation of the ground, informed him that a rivulet swollen by the late rains had now become a foaming torrent perfectly impassable to infantry. To avoid this difficulty he abandoned his favorite manœuvre of a flank movement, and resolved to attack the enemy by the centre. Launching his cavalry and artillery by the road to Brussels, he hoped thus to cut off the communication of the British with their own left, as well as with the Prussians, for whom he trusted that Grouchy would be more than a match.

The reserves were in consequence all brought up to the centre. Seven thousand cavalry and a massive artillery assembled upon the heights of La Belle Alliance, and waited but the order to march. It was eleven o'clock, and Napoleon mounted his horse and rode slowly along the line; again the cry of "Vive l' Empereur!" resounded, and the bands of the various regiments struck up their spirit-stirring strains as the gorgeous staff moved along. On the British side all was tranquil; and still the different divisions appeared to have taken up their ground, and the long ridge from Ter-la-Haye to Merke-braine bristled with bayonets. Nothing could possibly be more equal than the circumstances of the field. Each army possessed an eminence whence their artillery might play. A broad and slightly undulating valley lay between both. The ground permitted in all places both cavalry and infantry movements, and except the crumbling walls of the Château of Hougoumont, or the farm-house of La Haye Sainte, both of which were occupied by the British, no advantage either by Nature or art inclined to either side. It was a fair stand-up fight. It was the mighty tournament, not only of the two greatest nations, but the two deadliest rivals and bitterest enemies, led on by the two greatest military geniuses that the world has ever seen; it might not be too much to say, or ever will see. As for me, condemned to be an inactive spectator of the mighty struggle, doomed to witness all the deep-laid schemes and well-devised plans of attack which were destined for the overthrow of my country's arms, my state was one of torture and suspense. I sat upon the little rising ground of Rossomme; before me in the valley, where yet the tall corn waved in ripe luxuriance, stood the quiet and peaceful-looking old Château of Hougoumont, and the blossoming branches of the orchard; the birds were gayly singing their songs; the shrill whistle of the fatal musketry was to be heard; and through my glass I could detect the uniform of the soldiers who held the position, and my heart beat anxiously and proudly as I recognized the Guards. In the orchard and the garden were stationed some riflemen, — at least their dress and the scattered order they assumed bespoke them such. While I looked, the tirailleurs of Jerome's Division advanced from the front of the line, and descending the hill in a sling trot, broke into scattered parties, keeping up as they went a desultory and irregular fire. The English skirmishers, less expert in this peculiar service, soon fell back, and the head of Reille's Brigade began their march towards the château. The English artillery is unmasked and opens its fire. Kellermann advances at a gallop his twelve pieces of artillery; the château is concealed from view by the dense smoke, and as the attack thickens, fresh troops pour forward, the artillery thundering on either side; the entire lines of both armies stand motionless spectators of the terrific combat, while every eye is turned towards that devoted spot from whose dense mass of cloud and smoke the bright glare of artillery is flashing, as the crashing masonry, the burning rafters, and the loud yell of battle add to the frightful interest of the scene. For above an hour the tremendous attack continues without cessation; the artillery stationed upon the height has now found its range, and every ringing shot tells upon the tottering walls; some wounded soldiers return faint and bleeding from the conflict, but there are few who escape. A crashing volley of fire-arms is now heard from the side where the orchard stands; a second, and a third succeed, one after the other as rapid as lightning itself. A silence follows, when, after a few moments, a deafening cheer bursts forth, and an aide-de-camp gallops up to say that the orchard has been carried at the point of the bayonet, the Nassau sharp-shooters who held it having, after a desperate resistance, retired before the irresistible onset of the French infantry. "A moi! maintenant!" said General Foy, as he drew his sabre and rode down to the head of his splendid division, which, anxious for the word to advance, was standing in the valley. "En avant! mes braves!" cried he, while, pointing to the château with his sword, he dashed boldly forward. Scarcely had he advanced a hundred yards, when a cannon-shot, "ricocheting" as it went, struck his horse in the counter and rolled him dead on the plain. Disengaging himself from the lifeless animal, at once he sprang to his feet, and hurried forward. The column was soon hid from my view, and I was left to mourn over the seemingly inevitable fate that impended over my gallant countrymen.

In the intense interest which chained me to this part of the field, I had not noticed till this moment that the Emperor and his staff were standing scarcely thirty yards from where I was. Napoleon, seated upon a gray, almost white, Arabian, had suffered the reins to fall loosely on the neck as he held with both hands his telescope to his eye; his dress, the usual green coat with white facings, the uniform of the *chasseurs à cheval*, was distinguished merely by the cross of the legion; his high boots were splashed and mud-stained from riding through the deep and clayey soil; his compact and clean-bred charger looked also slightly blown and heated, but he himself, and I watched his features well, looked calm, composed, and tranquil. How anxiously did I scrutinize that face; with what a throbbing heart did I canvass every gesture, hoping to find some passing trait of doubt, of difficulty, or of hesitation; but none was there. Unlike one who looked upon the harrowing spectacle of the battle-field, whose all was depending on the game before him; gambling with one throw his last, his only stake, and that the empire of the world. Yet, could I picture to myself one who felt at peace within himself, — naught of reproach, naught of regret to move or stir his spirit, whose tranquil barque had glided over the calm sea of life, unruffled by the breath of passion, — I should have fancied such was he.

Beside him sat one whose flashing eye and changing features looked in every way his opposite; watching with intense anxiety the scene of the deadly struggle round the château, every look, every gesture told the changing fortune of the moment; his broad and brawny chest glittered with orders and decorations, but his heavy brow and lowering look, flushed almost black with excitement, could not easily be forgotten. It was Soult, who, in his quality of major-general, accompanied the Emperor throughout the day.

"They have lost it again, Sire," said the marshal, passionately; "and see, they are forming beneath the cross-fire of the artillery; the head of the column keeps not its formation two minutes together; why does he not move up?"

"Domont, you know the British; what troops are those in the orchard? They use the bayonet well."

The officer addressed pointed his glass for a moment to the spot. Then, turning to the Emperor, replied, as he touched his hat, "They are the Guards, Sire."

During this time Napoleon spoke not a word; his eye ever bent upon the battle, he seemed to pay little if any attention to the conversation about him. As he looked, an aide-de-camp, breathless and heated, galloped up.

"The columns of attack are formed, Sire; everything is ready, and the marshal only waits the order."

Napoleon turned upon his saddle, and directing his glass towards Ney's Division, looked fixedly for some moments at them. His eye moved from front to rear slowly, and at last, carrying his telescope along the line, he fixed it steadily upon the far left. Here, towards St. Lambert, a slight cloud seemed to rest on the horizon, as the Emperor continued to gaze steadfastly at it. Every glass of the staff was speedily turned in that direction.

"It is nothing but a cloud; some exhalation from the low grounds in that quarter," whispered one.

"To me," said another, "they look like trees, part of the Bois de Wavre."

"They are men," said the Emperor, speaking for the first time. "Est-ce Grouchy? Est-ce Blucher?"

Soult inclines to believe it to be the former, and proceeds to give his reasons; but the Emperor, without listening, turns towards Domont, and orders him, with his division of light cavalry and Subervie's Brigade, to proceed thither at once. If it be Grouchy, to establish a junction with him; to resist, should it prove to be the advanced guard of Marshal Blucher. Scarcely is the order given when a column of cavalry, wheeling "fours about," unravels itself from the immense mass, and seems to serpentine like an enormous snake between the squares of the mighty army. The pace increases at every moment, and at length we see them emerge from the extreme right and draw up, as if on parade, above half a mile from the wood. This movement, by its precision and beauty, attracted our entire attention, not only from the attack upon Hougoumont, but also from an incident which had taken place close beside us. This was the appearance of a Prussian hussar who had been taken prisoner between Wavre and Planchenoit; he was the bearer of a letter from Bulow to Wellington, announcing his arrival at St. Lambert, and asking for orders.

This at once explains the appearance on the right; but the prisoner also adds, that the three Prussian corps were at Wavre, having pushed their patrols two leagues from that town without ever encountering any portion of the force under the command of Grouchy. For a moment not a word is spoken. A silence like a panic pervades the staff; the Emperor himself is the first to break it.

"This morning," said he, turning towards Soult, "the chances were ninety to one in our favor; Bulow's arrival has already lost us thirty of the number; but the odds are still sufficient, if Grouchy but repair the *horrible fault* he has committed."

He paused for a moment, and as he lifted up his own hand, and turned a look of indignant passion towards the staff, added, in a voice the sarcasm of whose tone there is no forgetting: —

"Il s'amuse à Gembloux! Still," said he, speaking rapidly and with more energy than I had hitherto noticed, "Bulow may be entirely cut off. Let an officer approach. Take this letter, sir," giving as he spoke, Bulow's letter to Lord Wellington, — "give this letter to Marshal Grouchy; tell him that at this moment he should be before Wavre; tell him that already, had he obeyed his orders — but no, tell him to march at once, to press forward his cavalry, to come up in two hours, in three at farthest. You have but five leagues to ride; see, sir, that you reach him within an hour."

As the officer hurries away at the top of his speed, an aide-de-camp from General Domont confirms the news; they are the Prussians whom he has before him. As yet, however, they are debouching from the wood, and have attempted no forward movement.

"What 's Bulow's force, Marshal?"

"Thirty thousand, Sire."

"Let Lobau take ten thousand, with the Cuirassiers of the Young Guard, and hold the Prussians in check.

"Maintenant, pour les autres," this he said with a smile, as he turned his eyes once more towards the field of battle. The aide-de-camp of Marshal Ney, who, bare-headed and expectant, sat waiting for orders, presented himself to view. The Emperor turned towards him as he said, with a clear and firm voice: —

"Tell the marshal to open the fire of his batteries; to carry La Haye Sainte with the bayonet, and leaving an infantry division for its protection, to march against La Papelotte and La Haye. They must be carried by the bayonet."

The aide-de-camp was gone; Napoleon's eye followed him as he crossed the open plain and was lost in the dense ranks of the dark columns. Scarcely five minutes elapsed when eighty guns thundered out together, and as the earth shook and trembled beneath, the mighty movement of the day began its execution. From Hougoumont, where the slaughter and the carnage continued unslackened and unstayed, every eye was now turned towards the right. I knew not what troops occupied La Haye Sainte, or whether they were British who crowned the heights above it; but in my heart how fervently did I pray that they might be so. Oh, in that moment of suspense and agonizing doubt, what would I not have given to know that Picton himself and the fighting Fifth were there; that behind that ridge the Greys, the Royals, and the Enniskilleners sat motionless, but burning to advance; and the breath of battle waved among the tartans of the Highlanders, and blew upon the flashing features of my own island countrymen. Had I known this, I could have marked the onset with a less failing spirit.

"There goes Marcognet's Division," said my companion, springing to his legs; "they're moving to the right of the road. I should like to see the troops that will stand before them."

So saying, he mounted his horse, and desiring me to accompany him, rode to the height beside La Belle Alliance. The battle was now raging from the Château de Hougoumont to St. Lambert, where the Prussian tirailleurs, as they issued from the wood, were skirmishing with the advanced posts of Lobau's Brigade. The attack upon the centre, however, engrossed all my attention, and I watched the dark columns as they descended into the plain, while the incessant roll of the artillery played about them. To the right of Ney's attack, D'Erlon advanced with three divisions, and the artillery of the Guard. Towards this part of the field my companion moved. General le Vasseur desired to know if the division on the Brussels road were English or Hanoverian troops, and I was sent for to answer the question. We passed from square to square until at length we found ourselves upon the flank of D'Erlon's Division. Le Vasseur, who at the head of his cuirassiers waited but the order to charge, waved impatiently with his sword for us to approach. We were now to the right of the high road, and about four hundred yards from the crest of the hill where, protected by a slight hedge, Picton, with Kempt's Brigade, waited the attack of the enemy.

Just at this moment an incident took place which, while in itself one of the most brilliant achievements of the day, changed in a signal manner my own fortunes. The head of D'Erlon's column pressed with fixed bayonets up the gentle slope. Already the Belgian infantry give way before them. The brave Brunswickers, overwhelmed by the heavy cavalry of France, at first begin to waver, then are broken; and at last retreat in disorder up the road, a whirlwind of pursuing squadrons thundering behind them. "En avant! en avant! la victoire est ènous," is shouted madly through the impatient ranks; and the artillery is called up to play upon the British squares; upon which, fixed and immovable, the cuirassiers have charged without success. Like a thunderbolt, the flying artillery dashes to the front; but scarcely has it reached the bottom of the ascent, when, from the deep ground, the guns become embedded in the soil, the wheels refuse to move. In vain the artillery drivers whip and spur their laboring cattle. Impatiently the leading files of the column prick with their bayonets the struggling horses. The hesitation is fatal; for Wellington, who, with eager glance, watches from an eminence beside the high road the advancing column, sees the accident. An order is given; and with one fell swoop, the heavy cavalry brigade pour down. Picton's Division deploys into line; the bayonets glance above the ridge; and with a shout that tells above the battle, on they come, the fighting Fifth. One volley is exchanged; but the bayonet is now brought to the charge, and the French division retreat in close column, pursued by their gallant enemy. Scarcely have the leading divisions fallen back, and the rear pressed down upon, or thrown into disorder, when the cavalry trumpets sound a charge; the bright helmets of the Enniskilleners come flashing in the sunbeams, and the Scotch Greys, like a white-crested wave, are rolling upon the foe. Marcognet's Division is surrounded; the dragoons ride them down on every side; the guns are captured; the drivers cut down; and two thousand prisoners are carried off. A sudden panic seems to seize upon the French, as cavalry, infantry, and artillery are hurried back on each other. Vainly the French attempt to rally; the untiring enemy press madly on; the household brigade, led on by Lord Uxbridge, came thundering down the road, riding down with their gigantic force the mailed cuirassiers of France. Borne along with the retreating torrents, I was carried on amidst the densely commingled mass. The British cavalry, which, like the lightnings that sever the thunder-cloud, pierces through in every direction, plunged madly upon us. The roar of battle grew louder, as hand to hand they fought. Milhaud's Heavy Dragoons, with the 4th Lancers, came up at a gallop. Picton presses forward, waving his plumed hat above his head; his proud eye flashes with the fire of victory. That moment is his last. Struck in the forehead by a musket-ball, he falls dead from the saddle; and the wild yell of the Irish regiments, as they ring his death-cry, are the last sounds which he hears. Meanwhile the Life Guards are among us; prisoners of rank are captured on every side; and I, seizing the moment, throw myself among the ranks of my countrymen, and am borne to the rear with the retiring squadrons.

As we reached the crest of the hill above the road, a loud cheer in the valley beneath us burst forth, and from the midst of the dense smoke a bright and pointed flame shot up towards the sky. It was the farm-house La Haye Sainte, which the French had succeeded in setting fire to with hot shot. For some time past the ammunition of the corps that held it had failed, and a dropping irregular musketry was the only reply to the incessant rattle of the enemy. As the smoke cleared away we discovered that the French had carried the position; and as no quarter was given in that deadly hand-to-hand conflict, not one returned to our ranks to tell the tale of their defeat.

"This is the officer that I spoke of," said an aide-de-camp, as he rode up to where I was standing bare-headed and without a sword. "He has just made his escape from the French lines, and will be able to give your lordship some information."

The handsome features and gorgeous costume of Lord Uxbridge were known to me; but I was not aware, till afterward, that a soldier-like, resolute-looking officer beside him was General Graham. It was the latter who first addressed me.

"Are you aware, sir," said he, "if Grouchy's force have arrived?"

"They have not; on the contrary, shortly before I escaped, an aide-de-camp was despatched to Gembloux, to hasten his coming. And the troops, for they must be troops, were debouching from the wood yonder. They seem to form a junction with the corps to the right; they are the Prussians. They arrived there before noon from St. Lambert, and are part of Bulow's Corps. Count Lobau and his division of ten thousand men were despatched, about an hour since, to hold them in check."

"This is great news," said Lord Uxbridge. "Fitzroy must know it at once."

So saying, he dashed spurs into his horse, and soon disappeared amidst the crowd on the hill-top.

"You had better see the duke, sir," said Graham. "Your information is too important to be delayed. Captain Calvert, let this officer have a horse; his own is too tired to go much farther."

"And a cap, I beg of you," added I in an undertone, "for I have already found a sabre."

By a slightly circuitous route we reached the road, upon which a mass of dismounted artillery-carts, baggage-wagons, and tumbrils were heaped together as a barricade against the attack of the French dragoons, who more than once had penetrated to the very crest of our position. Close to this and on a little rising ground, from which a view of the entire field extended, from Hougoumont to the far left, the Duke of Wellington stood surrounded by his staff. His eye was bent upon the valley before him, where the advancing columns of Ney's attack still pressed onward; while the fire of sixty great guns poured death and carnage into his lines. The Second Belgian Division, routed and broken, had fallen back upon the 27th Regiment, who had merely time to throw themselves into square, when Milhaud's cuirassiers, armed with their terrible long, straight swords, came sweeping down upon them. A line of impassable bayonets, a living *chevaux-de-frise* of the best blood of Britain, stood firm and motionless before the shock. The French *mitraille* played mercilessly on the ranks; but the chasms were filled up like magic, and in vain the bold horsemen of Gaul galloped round the bristling files. At length the word, "Fire!" was heard within the square, and as the bullets at pistol-range rattled upon them, the cuirass afforded them no defence against the deadly volley. Men and horses rolled indiscriminately upon the earth. Then would come a charge of our dashing squadrons, who, riding recklessly upon the foe, were in their turn to be repulsed by numbers, and fresh attacks poured down upon our unshaken infantry.

"That column yonder is wavering. Why does he not bring up his supporting squadrons?" inquired the duke, pointing to a Belgian regiment of light dragoons, who were formed in the same brigade with the 7th Hussars.

"He refuses to oppose his light cavalry to cuirassiers, my lord," said an aide-de-camp, who had just returned from the division in question.

"Tell him to march his men off the ground," said the duke in a quiet and impassive tone.

In less than ten minutes the "Belgian regiment" was seen to defile from the mass and take the road to Brussels, to increase the panic of that city by circulating and strengthening the report that the English were beaten, and Napoleon in full march upon the capital.

"What's Ney's force; can you guess, sir?" said the Duke of Wellington, turning to me.

"About twelve thousand men, my lord."

"Are the Guard among them?"

"No, sir; the Guard are in reserve above La Belle Alliance."

"In what part of the field is Bonaparte?"

"Nearly opposite to where we stand."

"I told you, gentlemen, Hougoumont never was the great attack. The battle must be decided here," pointing as he spoke to the plain beneath us, where Ney still poured on his devoted columns, where yet the French cavalry rode down upon our firm squares.

As he spoke, an aide-de-camp rode up from the valley.

"The Ninety-second requires support, my lord. They cannot maintain their position half an hour longer without it."

"Have they given way, sir?"

"No —"

"Well, then, they must stand where they are. I hear cannon towards the left; yonder, near Frischermont."

At this moment the light cavalry swept past the base of the hill on which we stood, hotly followed by the French heavy cuirassier brigade. Three of our guns were taken; and the cheering of the French infantry, as they advanced to the charge, presaged their hope of victory.

"Do it, then," said the duke, in reply to some whispered question of Lord Uxbridge; and shortly after the heavy trot of advancing squadrons was heard behind.

They were the Life Guards and the Blues, who, with the 1st Dragoon Guards and the Enniskilleners, were formed into close column.

"I know the ground, my lord," said I to Lord Uxbridge.

"Come along, sir, come along," said he, as he threw his hussar jacket loosely behind him to give freedom to his sword arm. "Forward, my men, forward; but steady, hold your horses in hand, threes about, and together, charge!

"Charge!" he shouted; while as the word flew from squadron to squadron, each horseman bent upon his saddle, and that mighty mass, as though instinct with but one spirit, dashed like a thunderbolt upon the column beneath them. The French, blown and exhausted, inferior besides in weight, both of man and horse, offered but a short resistance. As the tall corn bends beneath the sweeping hurricane, wave succeeding wave, so did the steel-clad squadrons of France fall before the nervous arm of Britain's cavalry. Onward they went, carrying death and ruin before them, and never stayed their course until the guns were recaptured, and the cuirassiers, repulsed, disordered, and broken, had retired beneath the protection of their artillery.

There was, as a brilliant and eloquent writer on the subject mentions, a terrible sameness in the whole of this battle. Incessant charges of cavalry upon the squares of our infantry, whose sole manœuvre consisted in either deploying into line to resist the attack of the infantry, or falling back into square when the cavalry advanced; performing those two evolutions under the devastating fire of artillery, before the unflinching heroism of that veteran infantry whose glories have been reaped upon the blood-stained fields of Austerlitz, Marengo, and Wagram, or opposing an unbroken front to the whirlwind swoop of infuriated cavalry. Such were the enduring and devoted services demanded from the English troops; and such they failed not to render. Once or twice had temper nearly failed them, and the cry ran through the ranks, "Are we never to move forward? Only let us at them!" But the word was not yet spoken which was to undam the pent-up torrent, and bear down with unrelenting vengeance upon the now exulting columns of the enemy.

It was six o'clock; the battle had continued with unchanged fortune for three hours. The French, masters of La Haye Sainte, could never advance farther into our position. They had gained the orchard of Hougoumont; but the château was still held by the British Guards, although its blazing roof and crumbling walls made its occupation rather the desperate stand of unflinching valor than the maintenance of an important position. The smoke which hung upon the field rolled in slow and heavy masses back upon the French lines, and gradually discovered to our view the entire of the army. We quickly perceived that a change was taking place in their position. The troops, which on their left stretched far beyond Hougoumont, were now moved nearer to the centre. The attack upon the château seemed less vigorously supported, while the oblique direction of their right wing, which, pivoting upon Planchenoit, opposed a face to the Prussians, all denoted a change in their order of battle. It was now the hour when Napoleon, at last convinced that nothing but the carnage he could no longer support could destroy the unyielding ranks of British infantry; that although Hougoumont had been partially, La Haye Sainte completely won; that upon the right of the road the farm-houses Papelotte and La Haye were nearly surrounded by his troops, which with any other army must prove the forerunner of defeat, — yet still the victory was beyond his grasp. The bold stratagems, whose success the experience of a life had proved, were here to be found powerless. The decisive manœuvre of carrying one important point of the enemy's lines, of turning him upon the flank, or piercing him through the centre, were here found impracticable. He might launch his avalanche of grape-shot, he might pour down his crashing columns of cavalry, he might send forth the iron storm of his brave infantry; but though death in every shape heralded their approach, still were others found to fill the fallen ranks, and feed with their hearts' blood the unslaked thirst for slaughter. Well might the gallant leader of this gallant host, as he watched the reckless onslaught of the untiring enemy, and looked upon the unflinching few who, bearing the proud badge of Britain, alone sustained the fight, well might he exclaim, "Night or Blucher!"

It was now seven o'clock, when a dark mass was seen to form upon the heights above the French centre, and divide into three gigantic columns, of which the right occupied the Brussels road. These were the reserves, consisting of the Old and Young Guards, and amounting to twelve thousand, — the *élite* of the French army, — reserved by the Emperor for a great *coup-de-main.* These veterans of a hundred battles had been stationed from the beginning of the day, inactive spectators of the fight; their hour was now come, and with a shout of "Vive l'Empereur!" which rose triumphantly over the din and crash of battle, they began their march. Meanwhile aides-de-camp galloped along the lines announcing the arrival of Grouchy, to reanimate the drooping spirits of the men; for at last a doubt of victory was breaking upon the minds of those who never before, in the most adverse hour of fortune, deemed *his* star could be set that led them on to glory.

"They are coming; the attack will be made on the centre, my lord," said Lord Fitzroy Somerset, as he directed his glass upon the column. Scarcely had he spoken when the telescope fell from his hand, as his arm, shattered by a French bullet, fell motionless to his side.

"I see it," was the cool reply of the duke, as he ordered the Guards to deploy into line and lie down behind the ridge, which now the French artillery had found the range of, and were laboring at their guns. In front of them the Fifty-second, Seventy-first, and Ninety-fifth were formed; the artillery stationed above and partly upon the road, loaded with grape, and waited but the word to open.

It was an awful, a dreadful moment. The Prussian cannon thundered on our left; but so desperate was the French resistance, they made but little progress. The dark columns of the Guard had now commenced the ascent, and the artillery ceased their fire as the bayonets of the grenadiers showed themselves upon the slope. Then began that tremendous cheer from right to left of our line, which those who heard never can forget. It was the impatient, long-restrained burst of unslaked vengeance. With the instinct which valor teaches, they knew the hour of trial was come; and that wild cry flew from rank to rank, echoing from the blood-stained walls of Hougoumont to the far-off valley of La Papelotte. "They come! they come!" was the cry; and the shout of "Vive l' Empereur!" mingled with the out-burst of the British line.

Under an overwhelming shower of grape, to which succeeded a charge of cavalry of the Imperial Guard, the head of Ney's column fired its volley and advanced with the bayonet. The British artillery now opened at half range, and although the plunging fire scathed and devasted the dark ranks of the Guard, on they came, Ney himself on foot at their head. Twice the leading division of that gallant column turned completely round, as the withering fire wasted and consumed them; but they were resolved to win.

Already they gained the crest of the hill, and the first line of the British were falling back before them. The artillery closes up; the flanking fire from the guns upon the road opens upon them; the head of their column breaks like a shell; the duke seizes the moment, and advances on foot towards the ridge.

"Up, Guards, and at them!" he cried.

The hour of triumph and vengeance had arrived. In a moment the Guards were on their feet; one volley was poured in; the bayonets were brought to the charge; they closed upon the enemy; then was seen the most dreadful struggle that the history of all war can present. Furious with long-restrained passion, the Guards rushed upon the leading divisions; the Seventy-first and Ninety-fifth and Twenty-sixth overlapped them on the flanks. Their generals fell thickly on every side; Michel, Jamier, and Mallet are killed; Friant lies wounded upon the ground; Ney, his dress pierced and ragged with balls, shouts still to advance; but the leading files waver; they fall back; the supporting divisions thicken; confusion, panic succeeds. The British press down; the cavalry come galloping up to their assistance; and at last, pell-mell, overwhelmed and beaten, the French fell back upon the Old Guard. This was the decisive moment of the day; the duke closed his glass, as he said, —

"The field is won. Order the whole line to advance."

On they came, four deep, and poured like a torrent from the height.

"Let the Life Guards charge them," said the duke; but every aide-de-camp on his staff was wounded, and I myself brought the order to Lord Uxbridge.

Lord Uxbridge had already anticipated his orders, and bore down with four regiments of heavy cavalry upon the French centre. The Prussian artillery thundered upon their flank and at their rear. The British bayonet was in their front; while a panic fear spread through their ranks, and the cry of "Sauve qui peut!" resounded on all sides. In vain Ney, the bravest of the brave, in vain Soult, Bertrand, Gourgaud, and Labedoyère, burst from the broken, disorganized mass, and called on them to stand fast. A battalion of the Old Guard, with Cambronne at their head, alone obeyed the summons; forming into square, they stood between the pursuers and their prey, offering themselves a sacrifice to the tarnished honor of their arms. To the order to surrender they answered with a cry of defiance; and as our cavalry, flushed and elated with victory, rode round their bristling ranks, no quailing look, no craven spirit was there. The Emperor himself endeavored to repair the disaster; he rode with lightning speed hither and thither, commanding, ordering, nay, imploring, too;

but already the night was falling, the confusion became each moment more inextricable, and the effort was a fruitless one. A regiment of the Guards, and two batteries were in reserve behind Planchenoit. He threw them rapidly into position; but the overwhelming impulse of flight drove the mass upon them, and they were carried away upon the torrent of the beaten army. No sooner did the Emperor see this his last hope desert him, than he dismounted from his horse, and drawing his sword, threw himself into a square, which the first regiment of Chasseurs of the Old Guard had formed with a remnant of the battalion. Jerome followed him, as he called out, —

"You are right, brother; here should perish all who bear the name of Bonaparte."

The same moment the Prussian light artillery rend the ranks asunder, and the cavalry charge down upon the scattered fragments. A few of his staff, who never left him, place the Emperor upon a horse and fly through the death-dealing artillery and musketry. A squadron of the Life Guards, to which I had attached myself, came up at the moment, and as Blucher's hussars rode madly here and there, where so lately the crowd of staff officers had denoted the presence of Napoleon, expressed their rage and disappointment in curses and cries of vengeance.

Cambronne's battalion stood yet unbroken, and seemed to defy every attack that was brought against them. To the second summons to surrender they replied as indignantly as at first; and Vivian's Brigade was ordered to charge them. A cloud of British horse bore down on every face of the devoted square; but firm as in their hour of victory, the heroes of Marengo never quailed; and twice the bravest blood of Britian recoiled, baffled and dismayed. There was a pause for some minutes, and even then, as we surveyed our broken and blood-stained squadrons, a cry of admiration burst from our ranks at the gallant bearing of that glorious infantry. Suddenly the tramp of approaching cavalry was heard; I turned my head and saw two squadrons of the Second Life Guards. The officer who led them on was bare-headed; his long dark hair streaming wildly behind him, and upon his pale features, to which not even the headlong enthusiasm of battle had lent one touch of color. He rode straight to where I was standing, his dark eyes fixed upon me with a look so fierce, so penetrating, that I could not look away. The features, save in this respect, had almost a look of idiocy. It was Hammersley.

"Ha!" he cried at last, "I have sought you out the entire day, but in vain. It is not yet too late. Give me your hand, boy. You once called on me to follow *you*, and I did not refuse; I trust you'll do the like by *me*. Is it not so?"

A terrible perception of his meaning shot through my mind as I clasped his clay-cold hand in mine, and for a moment I did not speak.

"I hoped for better than this," said he, bitterly, and as a glance of withering scorn flashed from his eye. "I did trust that he who was preferred before me was at least not a coward."

As the word fell from his lips I nearly leaped from my saddle, and mechanically raised my sabre to cleave him on the spot.

"Then follow me!" shouted he, pointing with his sword to the glistening ranks before us.

"Come on!" said I, with a voice hoarse with passion, while burying my spurs in my horse's flanks, I sprang on a full length before him, and bore down upon the enemy. A loud shout, a deafening volley, the agonizing cry of the wounded and the dying, were all I heard, as my horse, rearing madly upward, plunged twice into the air, and then fell dead upon the earth, crushing me beneath his cumbrous weight, lifeless and insensible.

The day was breaking; the cold, gray light of morning was struggling through the misty darkness, when I once more recovered my consciousness. There are moments in life when memory can so suddenly conjure up the whole past before us, that there is scarcely time for a doubt ere the disputed reality is palpable to our senses. Such was this to me. One hurried glance upon the wide, bleak plain before me, and every circumstance of the battle-field was present to my recollection. The dismounted guns, the broken wagons, the heaps of dead or dying, the straggling parties who on foot or horseback traversed the field, and the dark litters which carried the wounded, all betokened the sad evidences of the preceding day's battle.

Close around me where I lay the ground was marked with the bodies of our cavalry, intermixed with the soldiers of the Old Guard. The broad brow and stalwart chest of the Saxon lay bleaching beside the bronzed and bearded warrior of Gaul, while the torn-up ground attested the desperation of that struggle which closed the day.

As my eye ranged over this harrowing spectacle, a dreadful anxiety shot through me as I asked myself whose had been the victory. A certain confused impression of flight and of pursuit remained in my mind; but at the moment, the circumstances of my own position in the early part of the day increased the difficulty of reflection, and left me in a state of intense and agonizing uncertainty. Although not wounded, I had been so crushed by my fall that it was not without pain I got upon my legs. I soon perceived that the spot around me had not yet been visited by those vultures of the battle-field who strip alike the dead and dying. The distance of the place from where the great conflict of the battle had occurred was probably the reason;

and now, as the straggling sunbeams fell upon the earth, I could trace the helmet of the Enniskilleners, or the tall bearskin of the Scotch Greys, lying in thick confusion where the steel cuirass and long sword of the French dragoons showed the fight had been hottest. As I turned my eyes hither and thither I could see no living thing near me. In every attitude of struggling agony they lay around; some buried beneath their horses, some bathed in blood, some, with clinched hands and darting eyeballs, seemed struggling even in death; but all was still, — not a word, not a sigh, not a groan was there. I was turning to leave the spot, and uncertain which way to direct my steps, looked once more around, when my glance rested upon the pale and marble features of one who, even in that moment of doubt and difficulty, there was no mistaking. His coat, torn widely open, was grasped in either hand, while his breast was shattered with balls and bathed in gore. Gashed and mutilated as he lay, still the features wore no trace of suffering; cold, pale, motionless, but with the tranquil look of sleep, his eyelids were closed, and his half-parted lips seemed still to quiver in life. I knelt down beside him; I took his hand in mine; I bent over and whispered his name; I placed my hand upon his heart, where even still the life blood was warm, — but he was dead. Poor Hammersley! His was a gallant soul; and as I looked upon his blood-stained corpse, my tears fell fast and hot upon his brow to think how far I had myself been the cause of a life blighted in its hope, and a death like his.

CHAPTER LIV.

BRUSSELS.

Once more I would entreat my reader's indulgence for the prolixity of a narrative which has grown beneath my hands to a length I had never intended. This shall, however, be the last time for either the offence or the apology. My story is now soon concluded.

After wandering about for some time, uncertain which way to take, I at length reached the Charleroi road, now blocked by carriages and wagons conveying the wounded towards Brussels. Here I learned, for the first time, that we had gained the battle, and heard of the total annihilation of the French army, and the downfall of the Emperor. On arriving at the farm-house of Mont St. Jean, I found a number of officers, whose wounds prevented their accompanying the army in its forward movement. One of them, with whom I was slightly acquainted, informed me that General Dashwood had spent the greater part of the night upon the field in search of me and that my servant Mike was in a state of distraction at my absence that bordered on insanity. While he was speaking, a burst of laughter and the tones of a well-remembered voice behind attracted my attention.

"Made a very good thing of it, upon my life. A dressing-case, — not gold, you know, but silver-gilt, — a dozen knives with blood-stone handles, and a little coffee-pot, with the imperial arms, — not to speak of three hundred Naps in a green silk purse — Lord! it reminds me of the Peninsula. Do you know those Prussians are mere barbarians, have n't a notion of civilized war. Bless your heart, my fellows in the Legion would have ransacked the whole coach, from the boot to the sword-case, in half the time they took to cut down the coachman."

"The major, as I live!" said I. "How goes it, Major?"

"Eh, Charley! when did you turn up? Delighted to see you. They told me you were badly wounded or killed or something of that kind. But I should have paid the little debt to your executors all the same."

"All the same, no doubt, Major; but where, in Heaven's name, did you fall upon that mine of pillage you have just been talking of?"

"In the Emperor's carriage, to be sure, boy. While the duke was watching all day the advance of Ney's columns, and keeping an anxious lookout for the Prussians, I sat in a window in this old farm-house, and never took my eye off the garden at Planchenoit. I saw the imperial carriage there in the morning; it was there also at noon; and they never put the horses to it till past seven in the evening. The roads were very heavy, and the crowd was great. I judged the pace could n't be a fast one; and with four of the Enniskilleners I charged it like a man. The Prussians, however, had the start of us; and if they had n't thought, from my seat on horseback and my general appearance, that I was Lord Uxbridge, I should have got but a younger son's portion. However, I got in first, filled my pockets with a few little *souvenirs* of the Emperor, and then laying my hands upon what was readiest, got out in time to escape being shot; for two of Blucher's hussars, thinking I must be the Emperor, fired at me through the window."

"What an escape you had!"

"Had n't I though? Fortunate, too, my Enniskilleners saw the whole thing; for I intend to make the circumstance the ground of an application for a pension. Hark ye, Charley, don't say anything about the coffee-pot and the knives. The duke, you know, has strange notions of his own on these matters. But is n't that your fellow fighting his way yonder?"

"Tear and ages! don't howld me — that's himself, — devil a one else!"

This exclamation came from Mickey Free, who, with his dress torn and dishevelled, his eyes bloodshot and strained, was upsetting and elbowing all before him, as he made his way towards me through the crowd.

"Take that fellow to the guard-house! Lay hold of him, Sergeant! Knock him down! Who is the scoundrel?"

Such were the greetings he met with on every side. Regardless of everything and everybody, he burst his way through the dense mass.

"Oh, murther! oh, Mary! oh, Moses! Is he safe here after all?"

The poor fellow could say no more, but burst into a torrent of tears. A roar of laughter around him soon, however, turned the current of his emotions; when, dashing the scalding drops from his eyelids, he glared fiercely like a tiger on every side.

"Ye 're laughing at me, are ye," cried he, "bekase I love the hand that fed me, and the master that stood to me? But let us see now which of us two has the stoutest heart, — you with your grin on you, or myself with the salt tears on my face."

As he spoke, he sprang upon them like a madman, striking right and left at everything before him. Down they went beneath his blows, levelled with the united strength of energy and passion, till at length, rushing upon him in numbers, he was overpowered and thrown to the ground. It was with some difficulty I accomplished his rescue; for his enemies felt by no means assured how far his amicable propensities for the future could be relied upon; and, indeed, Mike himself had a most constitutional antipathy to binding himself by any pledge. With some persuasion, however, I reconciled all parties; and having, by the kindness of a brother officer, provided myself with a couple of troop horses, I mounted, and set out for Brussels, followed by Mickey, who had effectually cured his auditory of any tendency to laughter at his cost.

As I rode up to the Belle Vue, I saw Sir George Dashwood in the window. He was speaking to the ambassador, Lord Clancarty, but the moment he caught my eye, he hurried down to meet me.

"Charley, safe, — safe, my boy! Now am I really happy. The glorious day had been one of sorrow to me for the rest of my life had anything happened to you. Come up with me at once; I have more than one friend here who longs to thank you."

So saying, he hurried me along; and before I could well remember where I was, introduced me to a number of persons in the saloon.

"Ah, very happy to know you, sir," said Lord Clancarty. "Perhaps we had better walk this way. My friend Dashwood has explained to me the very pressing reasons there are for this step; and I, for my part, see no objection."

"What, in Heaven's name, can he mean?" thought I, as he stopped short, expecting me to say something, while, in utter confusion, I smiled, simpered, and muttered some common-places.

"Love and war, sir," resumed the ambassador, "very admirable associates, and you certainly have contrived to couple them most closely together. A long attachment, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, a very long attachment," stammered I, not knowing which of us was about to become insane.

"A very charming person, indeed; I have seen the lady," replied his lordship, as he opened the door of a small room, and beckoned me to follow. The table was covered with paper and materials for writing; but before I had time to ask for any explanation of this unaccountable mystery, he added, "Oh, I was forgetting; this must be witnessed. Wait one moment."

With these words he left the room, while I, amazed and thunderstruck, vacillating between fear and hope, trembling lest the delusive glimmering of happiness should give way at every moment, and yet totally unable to explain by any possible supposition how fortune could so far have favored me.

While yet I stood hesitating and uncertain, the door opened, and the senhora entered. She looked a little pale though not less beautiful than ever; and her features wore a slight trace of seriousness, which rather heightened than took from the character of her loveliness.

"I heard you had come, Chevalier," said she, "and so I ran down to shake hands with you. We may not meet again for some time."

"How so, Senhora? You are not going to leave us, I trust?"

"Then you have not seen Fred. Oh, I forgot; you know nothing of our plans."

"Here we are at last," said the ambassador, as he came in followed by Sir George, Power, and two other officers. "Ah, *ma belle*, how fortunate to find you here! I assure you, it is a matter of no small difficulty to get people together at such a time as this."

"Charley, my dear friend," cried Power, "I scarcely hoped to have had a shake hands with you ere I left."

"Do, Fred, tell me what all this means? I am in a perfect maze of doubt and difficulty, and cannot comprehend a word I hear about me."

"Faith, my boy, I have little time for explanation. The man who was at Waterloo yesterday, is to be married tomorrow, and to sail for India in a week, has quite enough upon his hands."

"Colonel Power, you will please to put your signature here," said Lord Clancarty, addressing himself to me.

"If you will allow me," said Fred, "I had rather represent myself."

"Is not this the colonel, then? Why, confound it, I have been wishing him joy the last quarter of an hour!"

A burst of laughter from the whole party, in which it was pretty evident I took no part, followed this announcement.

"And so you are not Colonel Power? Nor going to be married, either?"

I stammered out something, while, overwhelmed with confusion, I stooped down to sign the paper. Scarcely had I done so, when a renewed burst of laughter broke from the party.

"Nothing but blunders, upon my soul," said the ambassador, as he handed the paper from one to another.

What was my confusion to discover that instead of Charles O'Malley, I had written the name of Lucy Dashwood. I could bear no more. The laughing and raillery of my friends came upon my wounded and irritated feelings like the most poignant sarcasm. I seized my cap and rushed from the room. Desirous of escaping from all that knew me, anxious to bury my agitated and distracted thoughts in solitude and quiet, I opened the first door before me, and seeing it an empty and unoccupied room, threw myself upon a sofa, and buried my head within my hands. Oh, how often had the phantom of happiness passed within my reach, but still glided from my grasp! How often had I beheld the goal I aimed at, as it were before me, and the next moment all the bleak reality of my evil fortune was lowering around me!

"Oh, Lucy, Lucy!" I exclaimed aloud, "but for you and a few words carelessly spoken, I had never trod that path of ambition whose end has been the wreck of all my happiness. But for you, I had never loved so fondly; I had never filled my mind with one image which, excluding every other thought, leaves no pleasure but in it alone. Yes, Lucy, but for you I should have gone tranquilly down the stream of life with naught of grief or care, save such as are inseparable from the passing chances of mortality; loved, perhaps, and cared for by some one who would have deemed it no disgrace to have linked her fortune to my own. But for you, and I had never been —"

"A soldier, you would say," whispered a soft voice, as a light hand gently touched my shoulder. "I had come," continued she, "to thank you for a gift no gratitude can repay, — my father's life; but truly, I did not think to hear the words you have spoken; nor having heard them, can I feel their justice. No, Mr. O'Malley, deeply grateful as I am to you for the service you once rendered myself, bound as I am by every tie of thankfulness, by the greater one to my father, yet do I feel that in the impulse I had given to your life, if so be that to me you owe it, I have done more to repay my debt to you, than by all the friendship, all the esteem I owe you; if, indeed, by my means, you became a soldier, if my few and random words raised within your breast that fire of ambition which has been your beacon-light to honor and to glory, then am I indeed proud."

"Alas, alas, Lucy! — Miss Dashwood, I would say, — forgive me, if I know not the very words I utter. How has my career fulfilled the promise that gave it birth? For you, and you only, to gain your affection, to win your heart, I became a soldier; hardship, danger, even death itself were courted by me, supported by the one thought that you had cared for or had pitied me; and now, and now —"

"And now," said she, while her eyes beamed upon me with a very flood of tenderness, "is it nothing that in my woman's heart I have glowed with pride at triumphs I could read of, but dared not share in? Is it nothing that you have lent to my hours of solitude and of musing the fervor of that career, the maddening enthusiasm of that glorious path my sex denied me? I have followed you in my thoughts across the burning plains of the Peninsula, through the long hours of the march in the dreary nights, even to the battle-field. I have thought of you; I have dreamed of you; I have prayed for you."

"Alas, Lucy, but not loved me!"

The very words, as I spoke them, sank with a despairing cadence upon my heart. Her hand, which had fallen upon mine, trembled violently; I pressed my lips upon it, but she moved it not. I dared to look up; her head was turned away, but her heaving bosom betrayed her emotion.

"No, no, Lucy," cried I, passionately, "I will not deceive myself; I ask for more than you can give me. Farewell!"

Now, and for the last time, I pressed her hand once more to my lips; my hot tears fell fast upon it. I turned to go, and threw one last look upon her. Our eyes met; I cannot say what it was, but in a moment the whole current of my thoughts was changed; her look was bent upon me beaming with softness and affection, her hand gently pressed my own, and her lips murmured my name.

The door burst open at this moment, and Sir George Dashwood appeared. Lucy turned one fleeting look upon her father, and fell fainting into my arms.

"God bless you, my boy!" said the old general, as he hurriedly wiped a tear from his eye; "I am now, indeed, a happy father."

[illegible]

CHAPTER LV.

CONCLUSION.

. . . .

The sun had set about half an hour. Already were the dusky shadows blending with the faint twilight, as on a lovely July evening we entered the little village of Portumna, — we, I say; for Lucy was beside me. For the last few miles of the way I had spoken little; thoughts of the many times I had travelled that same road, in how many moods, occupied my mind; and although, as we flew rapidly along, some well-known face would every now and then present itself, I had but time for the recognition ere we were past. Arousing myself from my revery, I was pointing out to Lucy certain well-known spots in the landscape, and directing her attention to places with the names of which she had been for some time familiar, when suddenly a loud shout rent the air, and the next moment the carriage was surrounded by hundreds of country people, some of whom brandished blazing pine torches; others carried rude banners in their hands, — but all testified the most fervent joy as they bade us welcome. The horses were speedily unharnessed, and their places occupied by a crowd of every age and sex, who hurried us along through the straggling street of the village, now a perfect blaze of bonfires.

Mounds of turf, bog-fir, and tar-barrels sent up their ruddy blaze, while hundreds of wild, but happy faces, flitted around and through them, — now dancing merrily in chorus; now plunging madly into the midst of the fire, and scattering the red embers on every side. Pipers were there too, mounted upon cars or turf-kishes; even the very roof-tops rang out their merry notes; the ensigns of the little fishing-craft waved in the breeze, and seemed to feel the general joy around them; while over the door of the village inn stood a brilliantly lighted transparency, representing the head of the O'Malleys holding a very scantily-robed young lady by the tips of the fingers; but whether this damsel was intended to represent the genius of the west, or my wife, I did not venture to inquire.

If the welcome were rude, assuredly it was a hearty one. Kind wishes and blessings poured in on every side, and even our own happiness took a brighter coloring from the beaming looks around us. The scene was wild; the lurid glare of the red torchlight, the frantic gestures, the maddening shouts, the forked flames rising amidst the dark shadows of the little hamlet, had something strange and almost unearthly in their effect; but Lucy showed no touch of fear. It is true she grasped my hand a little closer, but her fair cheek glowed with pleasure, and her eye brightened as she looked; and as the rich light fell upon her beauteous features, how many a blessing, heartfelt and deep, how many a word of fervent praise was spoken.

"Ah, then, the Lord be good to you; it's yourself has the darling blue eyes! Look at them, Mary; ain't they like the blossoms on a peacock's tail? Musha, may sorrow never put a crease in that beautiful cheek! The saints watch over you, for your mouth is like a moss-rose! Be good to her, yer honor, for she's a raal gem: devil fear you, Mr. Charles, but you'd have a beauty!"

We wended our way slowly, the crowd ever thickening around us, until we reached the market-place. Here the procession came to a stand, and I could perceive, by certain efforts around me, that some endeavor was making to enforce silence.

"Whisht, there! Hould your prate! Be still, Paddy! Tear an' ages, Molly Blake, don't be holding me that way; let us hear his reverence. Put him up on the barrel. Have n't you got a chair for the priest? Run, and bring a table out of Mat Haley's. Here, Father — here, your reverence; take care, will you, — you'll have the holy man in the blaze!"

By this time I could perceive that my worthy old friend Father Rush was in the midst of the mob with what appeared to be a written oration, as long as the tail of a kite, between his hands.

"Be aisy, there, ye savages! Who 's tearing the back of my neck? Howld me up straight! Steady, now — hem!"

"Take the laste taste in life to wet your lips, your riverence," said a kind voice, while at the same moment a smoking tumbler of what seemed to be punch appeared on the heads of the crowd.

"Thank ye, Judy," said the father, as he drained the cup. "Howld the light up higher; I can't read my speech. There now, be quiet, will ye! Here goes. Peter, stand to me now and give me the word."

This admonition was addressed to a figure on a barrel behind the priest, who, as well as the imperfect light would permit me to descry, was the coadjutor of the parish, Peter Nolan. Silence being perfectly established, Father Rush began: —

"When Mars, the god of war, on high,
Of battles first did think,
He girt his sword upon his thigh,
And —

and — what is 't, Peter?"

"And mixed a drop of drink."

"And mixed a drop of drink," quoth Father Rush, with great emphasis; when scarcely were the spoken words than a loud shout of laughter showed him his mistake, and he overturned upon the luckless curate the full vial of his wrath.

"What is it you mean, Father Peter? I 'm ashamed of ye; faith, it 's may be yourself, not Mars, you are speaking of."

The roar of merriment around prevented me hearing what passed; but I could see by Peter's gestures — for it was too dark to see his face — that he was expressing deep sorrow for the mistake. After a little time, order was again established, and Father Rush resumed: —

"But love drove battles from his head,
And sick of wounds and scars,
To Venus bright he knelt, and said —

and said — and said; what the blazes did he say?"

"I'll make you Mrs. Mars,"

shouted Peter, loud enough to be heard.

"Bad luck to you, Peter Nolan, it's yourself 's the ruin of me this blessed night! Here have I come four miles with my speech in my pocket, *per imbres et ignes.*" Here the crowd crossed themselves devoutly. "Ay, just so; and he spoiled it for me entirely." At the earnest entreaty, however, of the crowd, Father Rush, with renewed caution to his unhappy prompter, again returned to the charge:

"Thus love compelled the god to yield
  And seek for purer joys;
He laid aside his helm and shield,
  And took —

took — took — "

"And took to corduroys,"

cried Father Nolan.

This time, however, the good priest's patience could endure no more, and he levelled a blow at his luckless colleague, which, missing his aim, lost him his own balance, and brought him down from his eminence upon the heads of the mob.

Scarcely had I recovered the perfect convulsion of laughter into which this scene had thrown me, when the broad brim of Father Nolan's hat appeared at the window of the carriage. Before I had time to address him, he took it reverently from his head, disclosing in the act the ever-memorable features of Master Frank Webber!

"What! Eh! Can it be?" said I.

"It is surely not — " said Lucy, hesitating at the name.

"Your aunt, Miss Judy Macan, no more than the Rev. Peter Nolan, I assure you; though, I confess, it has cost me much more to personate the latter character than the former, and the reward by no means so tempting."

Here poor Lucy blushed deeply at the remembrance of the scene alluded to; and anxious to turn the conversation, I asked by what stratagem he had succeeded to the functions of the worthy Peter.

"At the cost of twelve tumblers of the strongest punch ever brewed at the O'Malley Arms. The good father gave in only ten minutes before the oration began, and I had barely time to change my dress and mount the barrel, without a moment's preparation."

The procession once more resumed its march; and hurried along through the town, we soon reached the avenue. Here fresh preparations for welcoming us had also been made; but regardless of blazing tar-barrels and burning logs, the reckless crowd pressed madly on, their wild cheers waking the echoes as they went. We soon reached the house; but with a courtesy which even the humblest and poorest native of this country is never devoid of, the preparations of noise and festivity had not extended to the precincts of the dwelling. With a tact which those of higher birth and older blood might be proud of, they limited the excesses of their reckless and careless merriment to their own village; so that as we approached the terrace, all was peaceful, still, and quiet.

I lifted Lucy from the carriage, and passing my arm around her, was assisting her to mount the steps, when a bright gleam of moonlight burst forth and lit up the whole scene. It was, indeed, an impressive one. Among the assembled hundreds there who stood bare-headed, beneath the cold moonlight, not a word was now spoken, not a whisper heard. I turned from the lawn, where the tall beech-trees were throwing their gigantic shadows, to where the river, peering at intervals through the foliage, was flowing on its silvery track, plashing amidst the tall flaggers that lined its banks, — all were familiar, all were dear to me from childhood. How doubly were they so now! I lifted up my eyes towards the door, and what was my surprise at the object before them! Seated in a large chair was an old man, whose white hair, flowing in straggling masses upon his neck and shoulders, stirred with the night air; his hands rested upon his knees, and his eyes, turned slightly upward, seemed to seek for some one he found it difficult to recognize. Changed as he was by time, heavily as years had done their work upon him, the stern features were not to be mistaken; but as I looked, he called out in a voice whose unshaken firmness seemed to defy the touch of time, —

"Charley O'Malley, come here, my boy! Bring her to me, till I bless you both. Come here, Lucy, — I may call you so. Come here, my children. I have tried to live on to see this day, when the head of an old house comes back with honor, with fame, and with fortune, to dwell amidst his own people in the old home of his fathers."

The old man bent above us, his white hair falling upon the fair locks of her who knelt beside him, and pressed his cold and quivering hand within her own.

"Yes, Lucy," said I, as I led her within the house, "this is home."

Here now ends my story. The patient reader who has followed me so far deserves at my hands that I should not trespass upon his kindness one moment beyond the necessity; if, however, any lurking interest may remain for some of those who have accompanied me through this my history, it may be as well that I should say a few words farther, ere they disappear forever.

Power went to India immediately after his marriage, distinguished himself repeatedly in the Burmese war, and finally rose to a high command that he this moment holds, with honor to himself and advantage to his country.

O'Shaughnessy, on half-pay, wanders about the Continent, passing his summers on the Rhine, his winters at Florence or Geneva. Known to and by everybody, his interest in the service keeps him *au courant* to every change and regulation, rendering him an invaluable companion to all to whom an army list is inaccessible. He is the same good fellow he ever was, and adds to his many excellent qualities the additional one of being the only man who can make a bull in French!

Monsoon, the major, when last I saw him, was standing on the pier at Calais, endeavoring, with a cheap telescope, to make out the Dover cliffs, from a nearer prospect of which certain little family circumstances might possibly debar him. He recognized me in a moment, and held out his hand, while his eye twinkled with its ancient drollery.

"Charley, my son, how goes it? Delighted to see you. What a pity I did not meet you yesterday! Had a little dinner at Crillon's. Harding, Vivian, and a few others. They all wished for you; 'pon my life they did."

"Civil, certainly," thought I, "as I have not the honor of being known to them."

"You are at Meurice's," resumed he; "a very good house, but give you bad wine, if they don't know you. They know me," added he, in a whisper; "never try any tricks upon me. I'll just drop in upon you at six."

"It is most unfortunate, Major; I can't have the pleasure you speak of; we start in half an hour."

"Never mind, Charley, never mind; another time. By-the-bye, now I think of it, don't you remember something of a ten-pound note you owe me?"

"As well as I remember, Major, the circumstance was reversed. You are the debtor."

"Upon my life, you are right; how droll. No matter; let me have the ten, and I'll give you a check for the whole."

The major thrust his tongue into his cheek as he spoke, gave another leer, pocketed the note, and sauntered down the pier, muttering something to himself about King David and greenhorns; but how they were connected I could not precisely overhear.

Baby Blake, or Mrs. Sparks, — to call her by her more fitting appellation, — is as handsome as ever, and not less good-humored and light-hearted, her severest trials being her ineffectual efforts to convert Sparks into something like a man for Galway.

Last of all, Mickey Free. Mike remains attached to our fortune firmly, as at first he opened his career; the same gay, rollicksome Irishman, making songs, making love, and occasionally making punch, he spends his days and his nights pretty much as he was wont to do some thirty years ago. He obtains an occasional leave of absence for a week or so, but for what precise purpose, or with what exact object, I have never been completely able to ascertain. I have heard, it as true, that a very fascinating companion and a most agreeable gentleman frequents a certain oyster-house in Dublin called Burton Bindon's. I have also been told of a distinguished foreigner, whose black mustache and broken English were the admiration of Cheltenham for the last two winters. I greatly fear from the high tone of the conversation in the former, and for the taste in continental characters in the latter resort, that I could fix upon the individual whose convivial and social gifts have won so much of their esteem and admiration; but were I to run on thus, I should recur to every character of my story, with each and all of whom you have, doubtless, grown well wearied. So here for the last time, and with every kind wish, I say, adieu!

L' ENVOI.

KIND FRIENDS, — It is somewhat unfortunate that the record of the happiest portion of my friend's life should prove the saddest part of my duty as his editor, and for this reason, that it brings me to that spot where my acquaintance with you must close, and sounds the hour when I must say, good-bye.

They, who have never felt the mysterious link that binds the solitary scribe in his lonely study, to the circle of his readers, can form no adequate estimate of what his feelings are when that chain is about to be broken; they know not how often, in the fictitious garb of his narrative, he has clothed the inmost workings of his heart; they know not how frequently he has spoken aloud his secret thoughts, revealing, as though to a dearest friend, the springs of his action, the causes of his sorrow, the sources of his hope; they cannot believe by what a sympathy he is bound to those who bow their heads above his pages; they do not think how the ideal creations of his brain are like mutual friends between him and the world, through whom he is known and felt and thought of, and by whom he reaps in his own heart the rich harvest of flattery and kindness that are rarely refused to any effort to please, however poor, however humble. They know not this, nor can they feel the hopes, the fears, that stir within him, to earn some passing word of praise; nor think they, when won, what brightness around his humble hearth it may be shedding. These are the rewards for nights of toil and days of thought; these are the recompenses which pay the haggard cheek, the sunken eye, the racked and tired head. These are the stakes for which one plays his health, his leisure, and his life, yet not regrets the game.

Nearly three years have now elapsed since I first made my bow before you. How many events have crowded into that brief space! How many things of vast moment have occurred! Only think that in the last few months you've frightened the French; terrified M. Thiers; worried the Chinese; and are, at this very moment, putting the Yankees into a "*most uncommon fix;*" not to mention the minor occupations of ousting the Whigs; reinstating the Tories, and making O'Connell Lord Mayor, — and yet, with all these and a thousand other minor cares, you have not forgotten your poor friend, the Irish Dragoon. Now this was really kind of you, and in my heart I thank you for it.

Do not, I entreat you, construe my gratitude into any sense of future favors, — no such thing; for whatever may be my success with you hereafter, I am truly deeply grateful for the past. Circumstances, into which I need not enter, have made me for some years past a resident in a foreign country, and as my lot has thrown me into a land where the reputation of writing a book is pretty much on a par with that of picking a pocket, it may readily be conceived with what warm thankfulness I have caught at any little testimonies of your approval which chance may have thrown in my way.

Like the reduced gentlewoman who, compelled by poverty to cry fresh eggs through the streets, added after every call, "I hope nobody hears me;" so I, finding it convenient, for a not very dissimilar reason, to write books, keep my authorship as quietly to myself as need be, and comfort me with the assurance that nobody knows me.

A word now to my critics. Never had any man more reason to be satisfied with that class than myself. As if you knew and cared for the temperament of the man you were reviewing; as if you were aware of the fact that it was at any moment in your power, by a single article of severe censure, to have extinguished in him forever all effort, all ambition for success, — you have mercifully extended to him the mildest treatment, and meted out even your disparagement, with a careful measure.

While I have studied your advice with attention, and read your criticisms with care, I confess I have trembled more than once before your more palpable praise; for I thought you might be hoaxing me.

Now and then, to be sure, I have been accused of impressing real individuals, and compelling them to serve in my book; that this reproach was unjust, they who know me can best vouch for, while I myself can honestly aver, that I never took a portrait without the consent of the sitter.

Others again have fallen foul of me, for treating of things, places, and people with which I had no opportunity of becoming personally acquainted. Thus one of my critics has showed that I could not have been a Trinity College man; and another has denied my military matriculation. Now, although both my Latin and my learning are on the peace establishment, and if examined in the movements for cavalry, it is perfectly possible I should be cautioned, yet as I have both a degree and a commission I might have been spared this reproach.

"Of coorse," says Father Malachi Brennan, who leans over my shoulder while I write, — "of coorse you ought to know all about these things as well as the Duke of Wellington or Marshal Soult himself. UNDE DERYVATUR MILES. Ain't you in the Derry militia?" I hope the Latin and the translation will satisfy every objection.

While, then, I have nothing but thankfulness in my heart respecting the entire press of my own country, I have a small grudge with my friends of the far west; and as this is a season of complaint against the Yankees, "Why should n't I roll my tub also?" A certain New York paper, called the "Sunday Times," has thought fit for some time past to fill its columns with a story of the Peninsular war, announcing it as "by the author of Charles O'Malley." Heaven knows that injured individual has sins enough of his own to answer for, without fathering a whole foundling hospital of American balderdash; but this kidnapping spirit of brother Jonathan would seem to be the fashion of the day! Not content with capturing Macleod, who unhappily ventured within his frontier, he must come over to Ireland and lay hands on Harry Lorrequer. Thus difficulties are thickening every day. When they dispose of the colonel, then comes the boundary question; after that there is Grogan's affair, then me. They may liberate Macleod;[1] they may abandon the State of Maine, — but what recompense can be made to me for this foul attack on my literary character? It has been suggested to me from the Foreign Office that the editor might be hanged. I confess I should like this; but after all it would be poor satisfaction for the injury done me. Meanwhile, as Macleod has the *pas* of me, I 'll wait patiently, and think the matter over.

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[1] I have just read that Macleod and Grogan have been liberated. May I indulge a hope that *my* case will engage the sympathies of the world during the Christmas holidays. H. L.

It was my intention, before taking leave of you, to have apologized separately for many blunders in my book; but the errors of the press are too palpable to be attributed to me. I have written letters without end, begged, prayed, and entreated that more care might be bestowed; but somehow, after all, they have crept in in spite of me. Indeed, latterly I began to think I had found out the secret of it. My publisher, excellent man, has a kind of pride about printing in Ireland, and he thinks the blunders, like the green cover to the volume, give the thing a national look. I think it was a countryman of mine of whom the story is told, that he apologized for his spelling by the badness of his pen. This excuse, a little extended, may explain away anacronisms, and if it won't I am sorry for it, for I have no other.

Here then I conclude: I must say, adieu! Yet can I not do so before I again assure you that if perchance I may have lightened an hour of *your* solitude, you, my kind friends, have made happy whole weeks and days of *mine;* and if happily I have called up a passing smile upon *your* lip, your favor has spoken joy and gladness to many a heart around *my* board. Is it, then, strange that I should be grateful for the past; be sorrowful for the present?

To one and all, then, a happy Christmas; and if before the new year, you have not forgotten me, I shall be delighted to have your company at OUR MESS.

Meanwhile believe me most respectfully and faithfully yours,

HARRY LORREQUER.

BRUSSELS, November, 1841.

THE END.

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